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CONYERS LEA

OR

SKETCHES OF CHARACTER

MILITARY, MAGISTERIAL, AND EPISCOPAL

BY

CYRIL THORNTON, M.A.



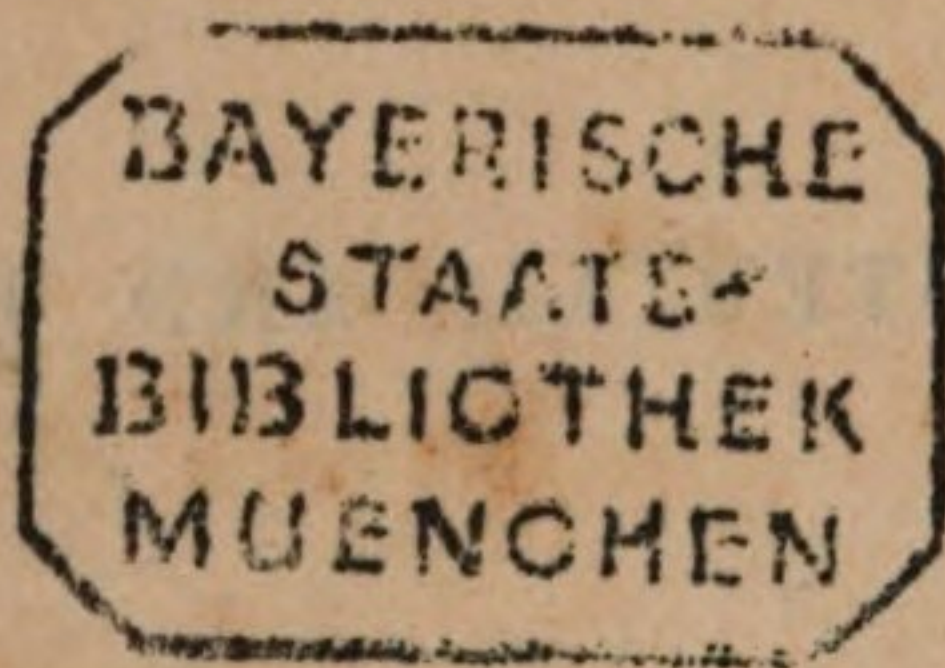
LONDON

SAUNDERS, OTLEY, AND CO.

66 BROOK STREET, HANOVER SQUARE

1862

Liv. 812



Affectionately Dedicated

TO

THE PREBENDARY OF GILLINGHAM MINOR

IN THE

CATHEDRAL OF SALISBURY

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

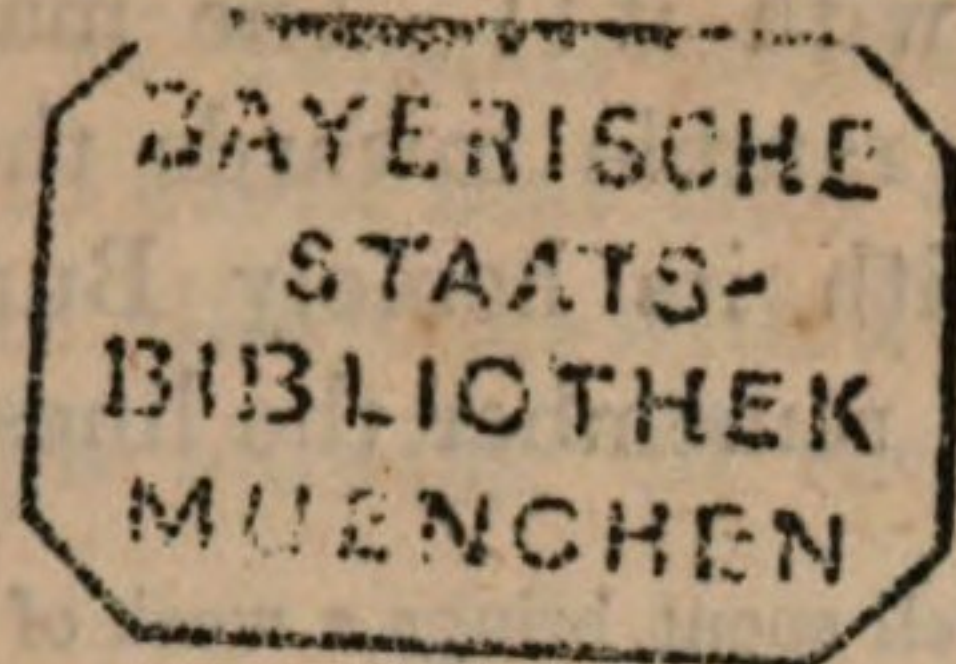
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PREFACE.



THE above tale was begun at a country house in the North, and was intended to be confined to a single chapter, describing two or three after-dinner scenes on a certain Sunday. The author, having a few months of vacation before him, and being in an out-of-the-way neighbourhood, decided on expanding the chapter into a story. This would give him the opportunity of introducing a number of original anecdotes, many of them relating to the Lancashire peasantry. They are recounted almost exactly as they took place, the names of the *dramatis personæ* being changed, and the story being slightly altered in one or two unimportant matters. Thus the Conyers' Rabbit appeared at Rochdale to a factory girl in the churchyard of the Baum Chapel, and was at once supposed to be the notorious 'Baum Rabbit,' popularly believed to appear once in a century. Colonel Conyers' exploits occurred at Christ Church, in the days of the author's sojourn there. Lord Millington's happened before the author's time, but he believes them to have taken place pretty much as related.

The banker's parlour, and the envelopes filled with sheets of blank paper; the claret in the furniture oil bottle; the church-rate meeting at Boddington; the scenes in the Sedgemoor, at the christening; Gawaine Conyers's method of carrying a church-rate; the German smoking in the railway carriage, &c., &c.; these scenes have been photographed from real life, and their lights and shades have faded, rather than heightened and deepened. Only one or two anecdotes have been introduced, for the originality of which the author cannot vouch, such as that of the man who officiated as '*frightful example*' at the temperance meetings. Lastly, the story was written nearly two years ago; but the duel with large swords, and an anecdote or two, have been introduced since. All the ecclesiastical matter may, as to its accuracy, be depended upon.



CONYERS LEA

CHAPTER I.

‘**W**HO is it who talks of the magnificent spectacle exhibited by Cato in his desolation; when he threw deuces in the lottery of life, and the gods, as a matter of course, went over at once to the winning side!! People are very fond of talking about the *majesty* of SUFFERING virtue. Now, I must own, that “virtue rewarded” is far more in my line. It is a far more pleasurable sight to me,’ continued the speaker, with a furtive glance at his sister-in-law, ‘to gaze upon an excellent, benevolent man, worn out by the toils of the day, reposing in comfort, his mind gladdened with the retrospections over (or of) a long day’s active usefulness. Now, look there at Gerald,’ continued the speaker, turning towards where his elder brother dozed; ‘look there; would you not judge that a sight to gladden angelic visitants, keeping watch and ward over him as he rests, *prostrated* by the labours of the day, the many and varied duties of the Lord’s day? — the long morning service; then the many and important avocations of the Sunday afternoon, which brings its

own peculiar duties with it!! The many letters to be answered. Then the ramble towards the village. Then the frugal dinner, with its homely Burgundy and dry champagne. Do you remember the lines —

A Sunday well spent, brings a week of content,'

and something or other, from the cares of the morrow? How does it go on, Emily? My candid opinion is that Gerald is fast relapsing into heathenism. Upon my word it is.'

'Now, Algernon,' said his sister-in-law, 'do stop. You are always quizzing Gerald, and I won't stand it, sir.'

'It is all very well to say, "Now, Algernon;" but look for yourself, and tell me how Sterne's recording angel could pass over that form without its "tributary tear."' And he turned towards a remarkably fine-looking, middle-aged man, whose very white hair and moustache contrasted well with his bronzed complexion and finely-chiselled features. 'Now,' continued Algernon, 'what is the reason that all those outsizers (and I fancy Gerald is over six feet three) make a point of lying upon the shortest and most uncomfortable sofas. Of course he selects the narrowest couch he can meet with; of course at the other end of the room. Just look at him. A white handkerchief over his face; his back well against the back of the sofa, as he lies upon his side, with his knees up to his chin — evidently just on the balance. Now, if you were to lay even your finger upon his knees he would topple over at once. Does not he look like Monti's veiled vestal? If his feet were only a little longer he would make no bad representation of the letter W, with a sort of funereal veil over the top. How he snores! Now, Emily, favour me with your opinion. What is your theory of snoring? Is it, as in the feline

tribe, indicative of hugeous satisfaction? I myself am rather disposed to adopt that view of the case, more especially if the snore alternates with a sort of half-suppressed whistle, as though blowing off the steam at high pressure.'

'Now, Algernon,' said his sister, 'how can you talk such utter nonsense; you who profess to have taken up such serious views of late? All very well in a major of light dragoons. When, however, he talks of turning his sword, not merely into a ploughshare, but into a sort of pastoral staff, I should have expected more gravity.'

'I dare say. Always the case with you women. You never can believe that a man is worth anything unless he happens to be always pulling a long face. You are so invariably caught by externals. Many years ago you thought nothing of a parson, unless he had a sort of address of the (what shall I call it) unctuous benedictory character. Then, when you meet with a man of this class, all you women run wild after him; you give him slippers sufficient for a centipede; you would put your pretty heads together to make a pavement for him, only too happy if he would condescend to walk upon them. How on earth do you expect him to keep his head straight upon his shoulders, especially if he have a wife at home who believes in him? Aye, blessed is he who hath a grey mare in his stable; who is mated with a Tartar, who will comb the small amount of whisker his party allow him to wear for him! Happy is he! One day, in London, I went to hear a celebrated preacher. In the middle of his sermon he brought out a magnificent pair of slippers; and, clapping them together, much to my surprise, he exclaimed, "Now, my beloved sisters in the Lord, you send me slippers, handkerchiefs, and all sorts of things. Now, I tell you, once for all, it won't do; for I'm a mar-

ried man, and there is Mrs. S. down there," pointing to his wife, who was *literally* "sitting under him." Now, I honoured the man for it. Well, then, another set of men came into fashion.'

'O! Algernon, don't talk in that flippant manner.'

'Flippant, indeed! I scorn the insinuation. Well, men with thin, cadaverous, whiskerless faces, of whom it may be said, "in fastings often," with long lanky hair, cut like an old brass in a church; men thoroughly earnest in their work, but seeing through a glass darkly; looking upon religion almost as a sort of myth; men rejoicing in obsolete forms and ceremonies; yet indefatigable in visiting the poor, the sick, and the needy, yet doing it in an antiquated fashion; feeding the sick, whilst starving themselves. I remember once, some eight or nine years ago, I was driving the coach from Exeter, where I was quartered, and I met a young fellow *outside* (I cannot call it *riding*) a rough pony. He was dressed in a long cassock, with a sash round his waist; on his head he wore a college cap; clad, as to his lower man, in black knee breeches and long gaiters. "Who on earth is that *guy*?" said I to the coachman.

"Why," said he, "it's the new curate of Kington Plantagenet—he's a queer sort of a chap; but they tell me he's not so bad as he looks, for a fellow who rides like a sack. They calls him a Puseyite, for he has cut down all the pews in the church: and I don't think he's far wrong, sir; loose boxes is all very well when you have room for them, and when you have nothing for your cattle to do, or when they are a bit over-fed, and you haven't regular work for them; but when there is plenty for them to do, and you want to keep them in topping condition, I'm all for *stalls*—and it's just the same with people as it is with hosses, a weedy thorough-bred is most fit for

nothing, leastwise without constant work—and then he don't want a loose box—but you see, sir, they wants all of them careful handling. One horse works best in a curb, another won't go except in a ring snaffle. Now Kington Plantagenet's is a 'orkard sort of parish. He and Mr. Jones, sir, tries to bit 'em all alike, but you see, sir, it won't do. A young chap may dress in breeches and long gaiters, sir, like the helper at stables, sir, when he's in mourning; but don't follow that he can handle the ribbons the better for that, sir. The last parson, and he was a far-seeing gentleman, and knew what he was about, yet he found 'em a most uncommon 'orkard team to drive, sir; never seemed to know the road, sir; but as to Mr. Jones, sir, bless you, *he'll never get them out of the yard.*"

There is, however, a common prejudice in favour of knowing who the speakers are in a story such as the present, something about them at all events. Well, Algernon, is Algernon Conyers, captain of a troop of light horse, in Her Majesty's service, and brevet-major, a younger brother of Colonel Conyers, of Conyers Castle or Abbey, for the terms were used indifferently, for the last owner was mad on the subject of abbeyes, and the lady is the wife of Colonel Conyers; she was a daughter of the Marquis of Kilbogie.

Algernon Conyers, as to his personal appearance, was somewhere about five feet ten inches in height. A fair man and remarkably handsome, light blue eyes, slightly aquiline nose, very regular features—fair hair and moustache, and long Crimean beard. The last, except so far as it did away with the abomination of shaving, was a decided mistake. His was one of those faces which seize upon you at once; you felt that he was thoroughly genuine—as to character, he was the beau ideal of a light horseman—first-rate cross country, a princely shot, extra-

ordinarily active, and of wonderful personal strength—very much the figure of those extraordinary brothers, who hang on by one another's toes at a very unpleasant height from the ground—though he had not the wasted used-up face with the hard lines one usually sees amongst gentlemen in the acrobat walks of life. Algernon was rather past thirty, he might have been thirty-five; Lady Emily was some ten years older.

‘This room, Emily,’ continued Algernon, ‘is far the finest in the house to my mind—these mixtures of styles are very picturesque. Now, this portion of the castle is decidedly Edwardian, one of the very few really fine specimens in the land. I am glad to find that old Tibbits is still butler here. What a funny old fellow he is! he gave me a long lecture on architecture the other day:

“You see, sir, they say Rome wasn't built in a day; no more was this house we live in. It was once a castle, then it was an abbey in the general's time, and now it is going to be a castle again. But the old people always calls it Conyers Lea.”’

Now old Tibbits had lived in the family for many years as butler, and though the colonel had made it a rule to part with him, giving him a month's warning every seven years, it always ended in his returning. ‘Confound it, sir,’ the Colonel used to say; ‘if I didn't do so the man would be my master in time.’ So Tibbits used to vanish for about one month every seven years, and the Colonel used to be as miserable as a cat in a strange room during his absence. Tibbits had far the best of it, for he used to visit his nephews and nieces; for being an old bachelor, who had picked up a fair amount of loot in India, we may feel assured that he was made much of by all his relatives, and his month was spent in a sort of triumphal progress from the dwelling of one relative to another. He gene-

rally returned before the month was quite up, for he used to say he presumed that the governor was getting desperate about this time, and he must go and put him straight.

‘Yes,’ said he to Algernon, ‘it’s a fine place, like o’ that, sir; but you see, sir, it’s like a gentleman, sir, with one of Hill’s new frock-coats on, sir — as it might be you, sir — and his great-grandfather’s small clothes; but the Colonel likes it, you know, sir, and so does her ladyship, and one wouldn’t wish to disoblige them! The Colonel, sir, has laid out a deal of money on the old place, sir; finer place than the Marquess’s! The Colonel, sir, was much blamed for not building a fine new stone house, six windows in a line *one* side of the hall door, six windows in a line on the *other* side of the hall door — square hall, sir, with statues, sir. They say England was hotter than India in old times. The natives there wear more clothing than seems to have been the custom here — I have heard said the statues are portraits. Well, sir, there’s no accounting for tastes. No, sir — these old places don’t do to patch up. Stone square house, sir, the house *for a family of distinction*, as the newspapers say, sir. Modern houses more comfortable, sir. In these old-fashioned houses, the housekeeper’s room and older servants’ apartments are badly planned, sir. Made so bold as say so to Mr. F., the great architect, you know, sir; and he said these matters were not sufficiently attended to.’

The Colonel was somewhat peculiar in his notions: in India they used to call him the modern Bayard, much to Tibbits’ astonishment, who always fancied (he said) that that make of folk wore fur caps and rode rough horses. ‘The Colonel had certainly a great many very curious ways of going on, but he wasn’t so bad as that. No: he heard that them Bayards knouted everybody — which was a cat with one tail, and that was bad enough (observed Tibbits)

in all conscience. No: the Colonel wasn't a man for the cat, and he never knew a man prosper who was. Of course there was some of those bad fellows in the army who were a disgrace to any regiment, and never could be happy long without having their backs occasionally *scratched*, just now and then, to make them lively; but that was, of course, another thing (he used to observe) — the exception which proved the rule.'

From this it may be inferred that Mr. Tibbits, the butler, was a sort of whig of former days — one of your steeds with extraordinarily high action, but little speed, setting their feet down again pretty much on the same spot where they took them up; pretty much the case of the party generally, with one or two noble exceptions, who, having been infected with American notions through a broad-brimmed medium, have taken to *racking*!! It may appear superfluous to give any description of Tibbits, as he is but seldom referred to in this narrative, although at Conyers Castle he was a most important personage, and reigned, with the lady's-maid and housekeeper as queen consorts.

Mrs. Cranworth had lived many years with Lady Emily, and it was always imagined that there was some sort of tacit agreement between the two. She was a very worthy personage, but sadly complained that Tibbits did not keep up his dignity before the young servants. Indeed, she had made a little complaint to her mistress that very afternoon.

'Mr. Tibbits was a very good man, and had proper feelings; but that she did not like his way of going on with Mrs. Golightly, Lord Millington's housekeeper, drinking out of the same glass in the housekeeper's room, my lady, and before the young servants, too. If old servants won't keep themselves up, my lady, how can the

young servants respect them? Moreover, Mr. Tibbits, my lady, was over-particular in his attentions to the under-housemaids under the mistletoe, my lady; and she had overheard one of them say to the other, that for her part she hadn't no objection to Mr. Tibbits at all — that many a girl might do worse; but the young lady, having been taken sharply to task, replied she wondered at people's impudence indeed. "No, not if she knowed it. She had heard, too, that there was no fool like an old fool;" which remark quite convinced the good lady that her suspicions were well founded; so she had thought of giving her her mittimus.'

The Colonel, however, would not hear of it, saying that he liked to see pretty faces about the house; and if Tibbits was such a fool, it was no one's affair but his own; he might occupy one of the lodges, and still carry on his duties at the castle, — which speech filled Mrs. Cranworth with consternation; however, she very wisely held her tongue.

'India,' continued Algernon Conyers, 'I have had enough of India for the present; that touch I got under the fifth rib, too, burns like fire every now and then. Those Sepoys fire well from behind a wall. Our surgeon always declared that the ball had passed through, but I don't believe a word of it. No; there it lies, sympathetic, and like the supposititious noses, *à la porter*, causes its present to suffer with its late proprietor. What did they do with him? Oh, they hung him. His skeleton still burns under an Indian sun, and so does the bullet at the present moment.'

'Very probably; but the parched feeling you allude to, in my humble opinion, may be mainly attributed to the *dry champagne*.'

'Well, it may be so; but I confess that my own theory

appears the most likely, certainly the more satisfactory. Pray, does Gerald usually spend his evenings after this fashion? You know that it is some time since I was here, and I am really anxious for a little information on the subject.'

The subject of his remarks still slumbered peacefully on. In spite of a few failings, he was a noble old man, warmly attached to his wife and family. Of course, he had his weak points: he had certain traditions, which he could not bear to have called in question. It so happened that in former days a Conyers had taken, or was said to have taken or received, the sword of John, king of France, which weapon had ever since been kept as a great treasure at Conyers Lea; but, somehow, *mutatis mutandis*, the weapon shown as the identical sword could not by any possibility be referred to an earlier period than the time of Henry VII., and in all probability it dated from the following reign. At all events, it was or had been a very magnificent affair, with its flat, circular pommel and reversed guard, enriched with medallions of silver, representing St. George slaying the dragon. St. George wore a sort of Phrygian hat, and was dressed *puris naturalibus*. The shape of the guard and its silver fretwork were exquisite; but the date was where the error lay. However, the gallant Colonel was just as well pleased. Alas! the genuine weapon, with its broad, double-edged, straight blade and cross handle, which hung near it, was now shown as an ancient *Roman* sword, found in the moat. A young clergyman in the neighbourhood, it must be confessed, had endeavoured to set him right (the Rev. Gawaine Conyers, a distant cousin of the gallant Colonel's). Now, he would have given any sum of money for the old relic, which bore the French king's badge; and he might have had it for the asking, if he had

gone about the matter sensibly and discreetly ; but he must take the trouble to set the gallant Colonel right as to his dates, and succeeded in making him very angry. His facts were overwhelming, not on that account the more convincing. In the present case, like the aged monk and his breviary, the gallant Colonel would not change his 'old mumpsimus' for his young kinsman's 'new sumpsimus;' so on the evening in question, instead of 'Good night, Gawaine,' and the usual hearty shake of the hand, he gave him two fingers only, after a somewhat awkward fashion, and a 'Good evening, sir, good evening,' which sounded very like, 'Don't let me see YOUR face here again in a hurry;' and this was Gawaine's last visit to Conyers Lea.

We have already been introduced to two of the personages, the Colonel and the Major; and, lastly, we beg to introduce the gentle reader to the Lady of the Leas, who has been all this time sitting apart in the glorious oriel window. She had evidently been very lovely, and was some ten years younger than her husband. It may be that the first bloom of youth had passed; but there is in English matrons a second bloom, like the Canadian second summer, less dazzling, but more winning; often seen where beauty of form and expression are found united to a contented and loving disposition.

'There is something,' observed Algernon Conyers, 'very peaceful about a Sunday evening, especially about the close of the summer's day. How one's feelings and one's sentiments change! I am, I trust, very different from what I was when I joined that death ride, as they called it, at Balaclava. Of course one has a great deal of annoyance to bear. I remember the old General saying to me one day, 'Hang it, Conyers! you were bad enough, in all conscience, before; you were the last fellow I ever

expected to turn saint. You were always a gentleman in your vices; but bang! dang! dash! &c. (we do not profess to give the exact words of the General), I can't stand *hypocrisy*. One's zeal is not always tempered with discretion. That Crimean fever nearly killed me!

'Oh! ah! yes. Indiscretions nearly killed you, did they?' observed the Colonel from his tressle. He had nearly woke up, but not quite, being in a sort of dog sleep. 'Indiscretions nearly killed you, did they; aye, dice, debt, and hard drinking ran through your patrimony, and committed matrimony with the drum-major's widow. Ah! dear me, eh what? tea-time already? no; what then, Tibbits? Robinson, my new tenant, wants to see me, does he? And on Sunday night, too. I never do business on a Sunday night. If it is to pay his rent, let him pay it to the agent. I don't keep a dog, and bark myself. Well, business is business; perhaps, after all, I had better see him. Suppose, Emily, you show Algernon that new fern in the conservatory, and then I shall find out what he wants. Why couldn't he come here on Monday morning? I have a good mind not to see him, after all. Well, business is business;' and with these words, he went to the last drawer in the library table, on the left-hand side, where he kept his private papers, and proceeded to look for a receipt stamp, which having found, he sat himself down at his writing-table, unscrewed his inkstand, took out his *moral* spectacles, which opened comb fashion, and hitched them upon the bridge of his nose.

'Good evening, Mr. Robinson.'

'Hope your honour's well, Colonel. I allers follows your honour's advice, and never puts off till to-morrow what can be done to-day, leastwise when money's concerned.'

‘Quite right, Mr. Robinson.’

‘It’s allers better to settle money matters at once, your honour.’

‘I’ll make no deductions whatever from the rent, nevertheless,’ mentally soliloquised the Colonel; ‘Algernon always thought him a rascal. He is *now* in arrears with his rent.’

‘Well, Mr. Robinson, it *is* cheaper. What is the amount?’

‘Well, ’t isn’t much, Colonel, one pound, seventeen and fourpence.’

The Colonel, as his groom once expressed it on a similar occasion, let his face down three or four holes at once.

‘Well, what is it all about?’ said he, snappishly.

‘You see, Colonel, it is about a church-rate.’

‘A church-rate, sir? and did you come to me on a Sunday night, of all the nights in the week, to tell me that you won’t pay your church-rates; why do you suppose I deduct them from your rent? I shall put on an additional ten per cent. Do you know what I pay for Conyers Lea one year with another? Why do you suppose that I deduct your tithes from the rent? By the way, what sort of land is the Low Leas?’

‘Good land, Colonel.’

‘Well, Mr. Robinson, your lease provides that, at a short notice, you must give up those twenty acres. I find that I shall require them myself.’

‘Well, Colonel, I might as well give up the farm at once.’

‘That, Mr. Robinson, you are quite at liberty to do, if you think proper.’

‘Well, but, Colonel, if a landlord won’t be liberal to his tenants.’

‘ Liberal, sir! what do you mean by liberality?’

‘ Well, Colonel, I asks your pardon; but the steward’s from home, and there’s a bit of money owing for rent; and I thought that I would make so bold as step up, for I am going to London to-morrow; so I thought that I would make so bold as to come up and pay it to-night; hope no offence, Colonel.’

‘ Well, Mr. Robinson, Sunday night is Sunday night. The Sabbath was made for man; and I make it a rule not to be disturbed by business matters on Sunday night; but there is a wide difference between refusing to pay your just and lawful dues, which have been fully considered in your rent, to your coming up on a Sunday night, in consequence of *inconvenience* caused by MY agents being from home. What will you take after your ride? (Pale brandy and cold water, Tibbits.)’

So Mr. Robinson proceeded to take care of himself, whilst the Colonel looked over the roll of banknotes.

‘ And so Mr. Gawaine Conyers is your clergyman, I find.’

‘ Yes, your honour, I haven’t much fault to find with him.’

‘ Indeed,’ said Colonel Conyers, ‘ I thought that his Romanising tendencies had given offence.’

‘ O, aye, Colonel, that’s a different thing. Manners they say makes the man, leastwise gentleman. He’s nice enough as a gentleman; but if so be as a clergyman don’t preach the Gospel, it’s like worshipping in the house of Dagon. I don’t sit under such a parson as he when I can help it. I don’t take account of any proceedings like of that manner. I’m a Protestant, and a true one, and I lifts my voice again anything I don’t like, and I can’t abide any parson WHOSOMEVER he be,

if he preaches false.' With these words, Mr. Robinson prepared to take his departure.

'Now, as you go home, cross the park, it will save you a mile; and through the abbey ruins brings you into the high road.'

'Why, thank you, sir, I had as lieve's not. Mr. Gawaine said you would allow it; but "No," says I, "not if I know it; what's to become of my family, Mr. Gawaine?"'

'“Why, man,” says he, “when I used to dine at Conyers Lea, I always rode through the ruins at night.”'

'“Ah, your reverence,” says I, “that's quite a different thing. Of course, he would never come near a parson; he'd be sure to keep out of your reverence's way; but as for me, I'll never give him the chance.”'

'Surely, Mr. Robinson, you don't *believe* in ghosts?'

'I don't put reliance in no such *rubbish*; but I do believe, when a man dies, he can appear to anybody he likes.'

'But surely, Mr. Gawaine (though his judgment, I own, is not in all cases infallible) never supposed that you would run any risk from which he would be exempt?'

'Yes, he did though, your honour; he never expected to see me again. Mr. Gawaine made pretence to laugh it off, when I had found him out; but he always bore me a grudge since I proved him to be a Tractarian. I denounced him in church one day, as was my duty as parish churchwarden.'

'How did you find that out?' said the Colonel, with a grim smile of satisfaction.

'He bows his head at the belief, but the Bible is again him in that; and do you know, sir, *I found out that he has prayers in his house night and morning!!!* “No,” says I, at the end of the service on Sunday afternoon, “I

and the parish ain't going to be made Tractarians of, to please anybody.””

‘Quite right, Mr. Robinson ; don't suppose I wish to defend Mr. Gawaine, though he *is* a sort of a relative. I have no great opinion, as I said before, of his judgment, and should not be surprised at his taking up any fanciful views ; but don't suppose for a moment that I wish to countenance them. I must confess though, that in my poor judgment, as to *your* religious principles, Mr. Lasts and yourself run no great danger.’

‘When I was in London I calls on the Rev. Phylactery, for I and Mr. Lasts the cobbler had business there ; so we got the parish to send us a deputation. So we told the Rev. all, and he was pleasant as possible ; said the country owed us a debt — I suppose he meant the parish ; “but,” says he, “so far as Mr. Lasts and you are concerned, I think that you run no *immediate* danger of perversion.” So I told Mr. Gawaine what the Rev. had said, and he laughed at first, but then he grew grave like on a sudden.*

‘“Mr. Robinson,” said he, “you have been from home for some days, which has prevented me from telling you before what I have now to say. Ever since I have been in the parish you have opposed me in one way or another, I *trust* from conscientious though mistaken motives. The parish was a perfect bear-garden when I became its pastor. Dog-fighting on the Sunday was the rule then. Now the church is crowded on the Lord's day. There is also a large, a very large Sunday-school. You, who have holy words continually on your lips, yet find fault with everything that is for the real benefit of the parish ; you who, amid a mass of silly charges, of what you call Tractarian

* We are enabled to give the Rev. Gawaine Conyers' address to Mr. Robinson from another source, *in ipsissimis verbis*.

practices,—amongst others, taking umbrage at what is enjoined by the canon, wherein it is commanded that when our Mediator's name is mentioned in the service, due and lowly reverence shall be made; which canon has been founded on Holy Scripture, where it is said, that 'at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow;'—you have hindered every movement in the parish that was for the real good of the parishioners; you have done me much evil;—and the Lord will, sooner or later, reward you according to your deeds. Your outrage of Sunday has been notified to the bishop by the archdeacon, who happened to be here on Monday, and wishing to see you on business he called to inquire of me the cause of your absence. Mr. Robinson, I am sorry *for you*. The consequences are likely to prove serious." With that he walked away with the look of the judge when he says, "Heaven have mercy upon your soul!" and he left me.'

'Ah, indeed! Mr. Robinson,' said the Colonel, in high good humour; for though he disliked Gawaine, he thoroughly understood Robinson. 'I am afraid you're booked for something unpleasant. What did you do then?'

'I sat me down upon the churchyard steps, for I knew what he meant, and a cold perspiration came off over me. I thought of Jem Moody, who has been half-witted ever since. I believe he was used very hard. My missis says Mr. Gawaine called the offence "*bawling*." I did make a goodish row in the church, I know; but he always bore me a spite after my getting a majority agin him two years ago last Easter.'

'All I suppose is fair in *war*, Mr. Robinson. Let me hear how you did it (for it must be admitted that there was truth in the remark of his Scotch sister-in-law, that "the Colonel *was* fond of a bit of gosship"); I suspect

you were one too many for him there. What did you do then ?’

‘I went to all the parishioners far and near ; to be sure they wasn’t all right ; but they knew they didn’t want a rate since Mr. Gawaine would have the ringers’ beer an sparrows’ heads struck out of the rates. They used to give three shillings a dozen for them, rats and mouse-tails three a penny, and an owl’s head a shilling. Mr. Gawaine had got then into trouble with the people. The priest had come over to see a sick man, and as it was a wet night, our parson sent to ask him to dine with him, and to sleep there ; and they then knew he was a Tractarian.’

‘Knew he was a what ?’

‘Why, half a Roman Catholic, and worse than that, as the Lord Mayor said, “he would rather have real turtle than mock.”’

‘A very natural speech from an alderman ; but go on, Mr. Robinson.’

‘Well, some one said something about this in the church at the vestry meeting. So, says I, “I judges of a man by the *company* he keeps.” With that Mr. Gawaine claps his hands, and cries out “*hear ! hear !*” You should have heard how they all laughed, except five or six who came with me, and the beer did make them sleepy ; they did “gee-haw ! just !” so did our parson ; he never could see when the laugh was against himself.’*

* The above episode is founded on fact, though several circumstances have been suppressed, from the fear of their being judged to be overdrawn. The farmer (he was living on the Sedgemoor) assured the author most solemnly that the Spiritual Courts (or, as he pronounced it, Spittle), were held at the Old Episcopal Palace ; that the enemy of mankind attended *in propriâ personâ*, and sat in conclave with the bishop and archdeacon, who, with ceremonious politeness, handed over the culprit to Satan, addressing him as “Your Majesty,” who assured his Lordship that he would return him in a few weeks’ time a very altered character.

‘The bishop comes here to-morrow,’ said the Colonel;
‘and Mr. Gawaine Conyers I hear is to be at the rectory.
He *may* call here, though it is not very probable. How-
ever if he does I will speak to him about it.’

CHAPTER II.



SO the wife and the brother-in-law sauntered off to the conservatory; they had not met for some time, and Algernon had much to tell his sister, for there existed between them that strong friendship and regard which similar tastes and pursuits, a congeniality of disposition, and a thorough confidence in, and mutual respect for, one another had naturally resulted in.

So the twain strolled on through the conservatory, the children with them, the gentle Mary hanging fondly on her uncle's arm; Charlie, a thorough young pickle of eleven, walking by his side; and Emily, his niece, a fine girl of seven, five years younger than Mary, and somewhat pertinacious, hanging equally fondly upon the tails of her uncle's coat, which had reached him from Hill's that very morning.

Algernon turned hastily round, and an expression half escaped him which sounded scarcely like a blessing. If there were a weak point in his character it was the sit of his coat!

However, he at once got rid of his persecutor by a little gentle bribery, making a sporting offer of sixpence to nothing that she could not lie upon the floor for fifty minutes without speaking or moving, which bet his niece at once booked, and proceeded to win.

'Really, Algernon,' said Lady Emily, 'I think that

you need not have separated from your old Colonel, with your pleasant ideas of bribery and corruption. But what are your plans? Surely, you have given up your Utopian idea of fitting up the old Grange and doing Mariana?’

‘No, I don’t mind planting the old moat to please you; but as I cannot let the place on account of the boggart, as they call it, I must perforce remain there myself.’

‘Oh, but not alone, Algernon,’ said his sister-in-law. ‘Not alone; why not marry some nice young girl or other?’

‘Aye! *marry!* what on? three hundred a-year and an old grange warranted haunted. Easy enough to marry, as poor Hood used to say, but desperately hard to settle. I shall find enough to do: the parson living a long way off, poor fellow, and he can’t afford a horse, I intend to be a sort of lay curate: besides, there’s Gawaine, a good fellow enough, in spite of his row with the squire. I wonder he does not *help* him, he’s close to the Grange, and might easily do so; I will see about it when I go there.

‘Moreover, there is plenty of justice’s work cut out for me: the other day a whole posse of us were going to the asylum, and when we got to Narinton, where we had to change horses, the landlord, as soon as we made an appearance, shouted out, “Now then, quick, all of you, four horses directly for the *lunatic* justices!!” I thought that it would have killed Lord Millington there and then. Yes, a magistrate has plenty of work cut out for him.’

‘Yes, dear Algernon, *interest magistratus tueri bonos et animadvertere in malos* (you see I have not taught Charlie for nothing); in plain though somewhat free English, it means tea and snuff for the old women, with a fair proportion of broth, and nothing but black looks for those people who won’t attend your lectures and who won’t join the “mutual improvement,” who vote cricket a bore, and all that sort of thing.’

‘Laugh as you like! I do intend to become a sort of Lady Bountiful in breeches (I know you will excuse me). Your Indian habits have quite spoilt you, and now that Gerald has succeeded to the Conyers Lea property (some eighteen thousand a-year I fancy), you intend to spend all your time in the country in driving about with your grey ponies, or doing just nothing at all.’

‘What was it Lady Charles was talking about at dinner the other day, about the Conyers’ rabbit? Mr. Robinson said something about it when we met him on the road.’

‘Well, it is a long story. Do you remember the ruins near the castle? they are the remains of the old abbey. Aubrey de Conyers, in the days of Henry I., had an only daughter, Bertha; she fell in love with a gallant knight, who had little but his sword, Sir Wymaris de Greenwode; he afterwards became Lord Chamberlain to the Empress Maud. In those days, however, he was poor, and it was not to be thought of; however, one fine night they made a run of it. In the morning she was missing; Sir Wymaris also was *non est inventus*. I also have not forgotten my Latin grammar. Sir Aubrey was in a fury, of course he made a bonfire of all her things,—it was the correct thing in *those* days.

‘Old Sir Aubrey hanged her dogs and shot her cats, or finished them off in one way or another: but what gave him most trouble was a large white rabbit, her especial pet: it is said he hunted this rabbit far and near, till he made the usual compact with a certain person; he then caught the rabbit at once, and prepared to roast it alive. The priest interfered, but he stunned him with his mailed hand. At this outrage his vassals trembled round him. The creature grew larger and larger, till it became the size of an ox. Placing its fore foot on his arm, which withered up at its touch, the beast or demon whichever

it was, told him that the estate should never descend from father to son : lastly, that he should never again see his children's face. It then passed through the castle wall, and disappeared in the abbey burying-place in a blaze of light. It is said to have appeared again for the last time, in the celebrated year '45, before my great-grandfather's brother was beheaded. I hear that it was as large as an ox.'

'Now, Algernon, for the tenth time, why don't you marry?' said Lady Emily; 'for I look upon a bachelor merely as a somewhat highly polished savage. Now, as some one or other says, I forget who, "it is only in savage life that every man is his own tailor, his own armourer, his own policeman," and the lower in the scale with the greater truth in proportion can this be proved. Now do you see in that enormous basin of salt water a number of polypi? Now take a polypus, cut it into several pieces, each piece will live and manifest the same phenomena of nutrition and sensibility which the whole polypus manifested. Turn it inside out like a glove, the internal part becomes its skin, the external part becomes its stomach. The reason is, that in the simple structure of the polypus the parts resemble each other and resemble the whole. There is no individualised organ or apparatus of organs performing one function and one only, such as nutrition, for instance. Now take some animal higher in the scale, and there you find the structure composed of dissimilar parts, and each part having a different office; that animal cannot be hewn in pieces and each piece continue to live as before—that animal cannot have its skin suddenly turned into a stomach. That animal in the social life cannot make its own clothes or its own rifle; the division of labour which has accompanied his higher condition has robbed him of his universal dexterity.'

'Ah!' said Algernon, 'I think I read your parable.

Lessons from common things, I fancy you would term it; or, rather, *uncommon* things. Now, let me see if I understand. You are speaking of the perfect bachelor condition. Now, in his present case, as a bachelor, he has two stomachs. He first tries one, and turns it inside out with faring sumptuously every day. Pale ale and devilled kidneys at ten; pâté de foie gras, fiery sherry, and sparkling hermitage, at or about two; saddle of mutton at seven, after turtle, and every sort of fish sauce he ought not to take; plum-pudding, trifle which proves anything but a trifle in the end; champagne, port, claret, burgundy. A series of indigestibles for dessert; a few cigars; then the opera, and a little quiet hazard afterwards; more champagne, and a broil, with other abominations in the shape of liqueurs, and then to bed. Well, no constitution can stand this. And thus he turns his stomach inside out. But there the analogy ceases. He marries to get a new one. Breakfast at nine, broiled ham and an egg; biscuit and cup of coffee, or glass of sherry, at one; dinner at seven, gravy soup, sole, leg of mutton, tapioca pudding, Cheddar cheese, three glasses of sherry, and as many of port; a book from Mudie's; a cup of tea, not too strong; a quiet forty winks; and then to bed: cigars tabooed, for wife puts something in his pipe, and he smokes it!

‘O Algernon, how can you talk such nonsense?’

‘Nonsense, indeed! I forgot, though, the policeman and the armourer. But never mind; if you will get up hard words out of the books from Mudie's to stump a poor fellow like myself, what can I do?’

‘Well,’ said Lady Emily, ‘perhaps you are not so far out of order; but you men appear to think only of eating and drinking. But speaking of the two different ——. I hardly know how to express it.’

‘Stomachs, madame!’

‘O Algernon, you are incorrigible. I own I did use the word; but then—’

‘Ah, yes! like you,’ said Algernon. ‘You mean, as Tab Brambles observes, science is of no sex!’

‘Do be quiet! What I mean to say is this: when your tadpole loses his tail, and becomes a respectable and steady young frog, finding that he has others to please, others to think for, others whose happiness depends on his own, and whose happiness naturally reflects itself back upon himself, he can no longer think only for himself, plan for himself. The vowel “I” no longer becomes his I-dol; it justly merges itself into *we*. He finds his chief happiness in seeking to please others; and is continually succeeding, but not always. He must be regular, for the happiness of others much depends on his regularity; and so, from a somewhat loose fish—a tadpole—he has formed other habits, and lives on dry land, like his betters.’

‘So I am a tadpole, and Gerald a frog,’ said Algernon, putting his hands in his pockets, and attentively regarding his boots. ‘Yes, I suppose I am. Well, in his light cavalry uniform, Gerald is not unlike a frog. And I am a tadpole. Well, we have each a different path in life. Green meadows for Gerald, and a weedy pond for me.’

‘Well; but, Algernon, why not marry? You know ours was a romantic affair enough.’

‘I can well understand your doing anything romantic. But Gerald is as close as wax on these matters; and I don’t think that you ever mentioned the subject to me.’

‘Well, if you like, I will tell you all about it. I was, I think, about nineteen, and Gerald about thirty. Strange, no one looked upon him as a marrying man. He was then, I think, junior captain, or nearly so. Promo-

tion had been dreadfully slow. Papa was very fond of him; always liked to have him near him. I knew him thoroughly; papa didn't; and as the "Times" says that no woman, not absolutely a Gorgon, can fail to bring any man to her feet, if she can get him for a month to herself in a country house, alas! poor Gerald fell into bad hands, and was done for. He asked papa, who was thunder-struck. Gerald told him very fairly that he had only a few thousand pounds in addition to his pay; but that he could, he fancied, get an appointment to India. He would leave everything to my father; he would wait any time if papa would sanction the engagement. Papa told him that he must be mistaken; his daughter had no idea of marrying; no, none whatever. But Major Conyers wished to see me. I should be sent for. He would find how mistaken he had been. Papa had a *great* regard for him; should be sorry that any little mistake should break off the acquaintance. He would send for me. So I came. I could not help smiling at the intense misery depicted on Gerald's face. It gave an air of great spirituality to his handsome face. Well, papa told me of Gerald's proposal. I looked awfully demure. He wished me to assure him that he had been mistaken, and that it could not be. I had not had all my trouble for nothing; so I quietly said that I had accepted Major Conyers, and intended to marry him. Papa looked awful!

"You will be beggars! What do you intend, to marry and ride in a baggage waggon, I suppose?"

'I reminded him that I had 30,000*l.* at my own disposal, and that we couldn't starve, therefore. I knew it was a sore subject, but I felt like one possessed. Give him up—never! So it was at last arranged that he was to leave me perfectly free for two years—no engagement whatever. Gerald behaved splendidly, vowed that he con-

sidered himself as engaged to me, though he looked upon me as quite free. Papa went to Italy for two years; he soon saw that it was no good. The only drawback was the want of money. Your poor uncle's sons were then alive. Gerald's chance was not worth eighteenpence. Those two long miserable years passed, and papa gave his consent. He was not sorry to feel obliged to do so, for he was very fond of Gerald, and thought he behaved well. We married. Gerald got an appointment in India, where we remained for many years, as you know — till General Conyers' death. Of course, we have had our troubles and sorrows, from which no one can be free; but our life has been a very happy one.'

'Well, well,' said Algernon; 'I am not a marrying man, and I shall have plenty to employ me. Surely matrimony is not a necessity. Hereafter they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels. Why should it not be so on earth, especially in my own particular case? In wedded life there are more cares, more anxieties, more troubles. A single life may be lonely. A man may not be altogether sorrowful. If he uses his money rightly he may cause many to rejoice. Then cometh the end, Emily. Why should we increase the ties that weigh us down to earth?'

'I fear, Algernon, that the "*I am not long for this world*" style of reasoning is very deceptive. Is it a sign of devoted heart? I fear not. There is a slight degree of bitterness in it. Ah, Algernon, are there not some old *memories* still clinging round your heart? I always suspect that there was some fair dame or demoiselle who had too great an influence over you when you went to the Crimea.'

Algernon looked rather fidgety; a sort of hang-dog look. 'Well, I fancy it is pretty well known.'

'What is pretty well known?'

‘Why, about Blanche.’

‘Oh, Blanche was it? But how the girl used to follow you like your own shadow, miserable unless she was walking alone with you in the park! You were, I think, on detachment then?’

‘I was.’

‘And so she wouldn’t have you after all? When did you propose?’

‘Shortly before I left the last time. I was staying with Hotspur Geraldine. The old Marquis was away a day, and Hotspur ruled supreme.’

‘“I say, Algernon,” said he one day, “what are you going to do, old fellow? I am rather intimate with these people, and I am rather in a fix. Why not speak to the governor? The girl is safe enough.”’

‘Well, I thought so; rode over; met her in the park; popped the question. She took it very coolly; had quite mistaken her; she looked upon me merely as a brother, and all that sort of thing. I told her plainly what I thought of her conduct, but not unkindly. She was much affected, but unyielding as granite; and I saw her often, but could not shake her. She was quite disposed to correspond with me, but that was all. We kept up a correspondence for some time. She married a short time ago.’

‘Well, Algernon, did you love her?’

‘Aye, that did I. I used to stroll out upon the moors by myself, and feel myself so utterly miserable that I wished myself dead. However, I fought hard against it, and should have conquered, but a miserable bilious attack laid me low. I spent much of my time in the library by myself, week after week, too listless, too utterly done up, even to open a book. Geraldine tried to rouse me to some purpose.’

“I say, old fellow,” he used to say, “you are the last fellow I thought likely to go ‘toes up’ for a mere heartless coquette. It’s too bad; upon my word it is.”

‘Well, I got so seriously ill that Geraldine got frightened, and wrote to the Colonel, begging him to recall me. Poor old man—he felt for me—came down at once and carried me off with him. Then came the Crimea. Well, I was getting better, and then came that affair at Balaclava. The hurt wasn’t so bad; but I was so wretchedly out of health that I had some difficulty in ever coming round. Blanche wanted me to come to her wedding; she always declared that she was a cousin; but I declined. I had suffered much, and did not choose to look upon the matter as of slight moment. Of course, I had had my fancies before, but never anything very serious; here and there a ball-room fancy, for perhaps an evening, nothing more. However, there is one comfort, a blow of that nature thoroughly numbs; a sort of *coup de grace*; there is no very great sorrow afterwards; the sensibilities are blunted. I remember staying at the hotel for a week, never leaving the house once, for the mere chance of seeing her. I could not muster up resolution to call. She drove up to the door alone one day, and I could not then even muster up resolution to go down and speak to her. I have ridden up to a battery with a tolerable amount of coolness and self-possession; but as for going down then! I could not have done it if my younger son’s patrimony depended on it.’

‘Patrimony, dear Algernon, why not matrimony?’

‘O Emily! and I was so carefully avoiding that wretched pun. To think that you should have fallen into it.’

Lady Emily tossed her head, and did not look particu-

larly happy, *vexat censura columbas*, but she speedily recovered herself.

‘ So you laid a trap for me,’ said she. ‘ Very well, Algernon, my friend ! look out for yourself, I strongly advise you—wait till I catch you tripping. What a long time Gerald is with that fellow Robinson ! You were at Balston, were not you, for a year ? I thought that the place was celebrated for beauties.’

‘ Why so it was ; but we were in dreadful odour ; some of the Heavies were there before us ; the manufacturers called upon them, and they sent back their cards, saying that they did business through Buckmaster, and were not anxious to increase the circle of their acquaintance. Well, we voted them a set of blackguards, and so they were, but that didn’t help us at all. Not a soul called at the barracks ; so after lunch one wet day, Lambton St. Maur observed,

“ This is awfully slow work — they avoid us as if instead of Her Majesty’s light horse we were the devil’s own ! What is to be done ? ”

“ Well, suppose we make a demonstration,” said Fitzgerald, a young cornet ; “ I’ll do donkey.”

“ What do you mean ? ” said we.

“ Why, I’ll carry a basket of cards, and we’ll leave them on every man who has daughters, that is, if they are decent looking, in this ancient city.”

‘ Out we turned, Mauleverer, Ethelstone Scrope, Brydges, Fitzgerald, and I. We did not take the trouble to change, but went in uniform. The mayor was not at home. We gave our cards. Out came two pretty girls of fifteen or sixteen, and bolted, like rabbits into a warren, when they saw us. I never saw girls in such a fright. The next man was in the iron trade.

“ Now, gentlemen,” said he ; “ what will you take ? ”

There seems to be no nonsense about *you* ; but your predecessors were a blackguard lot, and no mistake."

' So we lighted our cigars, and drank gin and water. Well, he was a very jolly fellow, and we all went up-stairs to take tea, and cut mess. He had several nice lady-like daughters, very pretty girls. One of them cut Ethelstone Scrope head over heels in an instant: eventually she became Mrs. Scrope. Well, we went to one or two more, and were hospitably received, and asked them to dine on Thursday, the strangers' night, and found them very good fellows. So we had cards to a very grand ball—a splendid affair. I went late, couldn't get a fly, pavement very wet, unsuitable for patent leathers. The carpet had not been taken up, but there was a linen tightly stretched over it. There was a quadrille forming. I joined: walked through *l'été*, and found, to my horror, that I was making a black path where I went; so lifting up the curtains, I had a sly polish under them, getting my boots all right. I had been dancing a great deal with the daughter of the house, a pretty girl of nineteen. From curiosity I remained till last!

" "Dear me, Captain Conyers," said the lady of the house, "did you observe that black path which some untidy person left behind him?"

" "I did," said I.

" "Who could it have been?" said she.

' Thinks I "Are you chaffing? if so, I'll soon tell you." But no, there was an air of sober earnestness about them which was very satisfactory.

" "Could it have been General Thompson?" said the mother.

" "No, mamma, he came late, and this happened at the beginning of the evening; and look, mamma, he has been cleaning his feet here," holding up the curtain,

‘ I had no notion that I had made such an awful mess.

‘ “ Well now, the Baron Von Gerther came early. Now, Captain Conyers, *do* you think he did it ? ”

‘ “ Upon my word, I can’t say,” replied I, “ Germans untidy dogs all. Good night, Mrs. Brown, good night, Miss Brown,” and out we all walked.

‘ “ Upon my *honour*, Conyers,” said Scrope, “ you have the impudence of Lucifer ; I never met your equal.”

‘ Dear me, those were happy days,’ said Algernon. ‘ They were good fellows — all of them. One or two poor fellows are dead — killed in battle ; three or four poor fellows are married ! The regiment is not what it was. We were like so many brothers, only we did not quarrel. Why it is, I know not ; but people in general appear so mortally afraid of military men — of dragoons especially. I can well understand a pack of raw lads disliking to meet the “ *officers*,” as they term them, and speaking of them with a certain amount of reverential awe. No doubt, in a ball-room, a mere lout of an ensign, in his first uniform, has it all his own way with the girls. A Guardsman of some twelve years’ service hasn’t a chance with him — certainly he hadn’t before the Guards and the line adopted the moustache ; I mean when in *mufti*. To my mind, military men are the most agreeable men anywhere : there is more openness and frankness amongst them — I mean your better sort of military men, not those who sell out soon, and go on the turf, and give themselves up to every sort of blackguardism. Barristers, as a class, when a few get together, make themselves intensely disagreeable, always cutting up everybody else ; and now and then they have a battle royal. Parsons are very well in their way : many very pleasant and agreeable, many very slow in every respect, and uncompanionable ; add to these, gentlemen of the sister isle, disposed to tilt

at all comers, especially if they belong themselves to a certain party in the Church.'

'Well, Algernon,' said Lady Emily, 'you have never yet given me a satisfactory reason for not marrying.'

'No? Why, I thought that I had given you a hundred: I am too old — in my thirty-sixth year. Now, look here, no man can enter into the matrimonial race with a fair chance of winning, so heavily weighted as I am. In the first place, I can't afford it; I couldn't marry for money — I had rather be flogged (privately). Do you remember what my favourite author, Taylor, says? He speaks about his fancy in early life, that there could be two sorts of marriages, either sufficiently satisfactory, which he terms "the incorporate existence marriage," and "the pleasant additament marriage." His idea of the first was that in which all interests would be deepened, all objects exalted, rewards and forfeitures doubled, and more than doubled, and all the comparatives turned into superlatives. Now, that, in my humble opinion, is the only right sort of marriage; and then he very appositely quotes Antonio's answer in Webster's play of the "Duchess of Malfy:"—

"I take it, as those that deny Purgatory —
It locally contains a heaven or hell;
There is no third place in it."

'Now, as to marriage number two. I had a sort of notion, that though perfect individuality might not be merged, still one might live one's own life, with the addition of some gentle, gay, graceful, easy-hearted creature, who would lie lightly upon the surface of one's being, be at hand whenever solitude and serious pursuits had become irksome, and never in the way when she was not wanted. Visions such as these are usually charms of our epicurean

youth. Verily, there is no such wife, and marriage is what Antonio considered it to be.'

'Well, but, Algernon, just now you talked about a new digestion, or something equally pleasing; now you are talking about a new existence — a sort of excrescence, *versus* a sort of metempsychosis.'

'Well,' said Algernon, 'I think that you originated the subject; some curious creature with a couple of digestions, was it not? Oh, no; I remember two.'

'Now do be quiet, Algernon; do let it pass once and for ever. You will worry me into the belief that I have really said something improper.'

'Well,' said Algernon, 'don't behave as a lady once did to me at Cheltenham. I was strolling through the gardens, and it began to rain. Observing a young married lady without an umbrella, and getting drenched in consequence, I went to her and offered her my umbrella, saying, "You can send it to the hotel I am staying at." She drew herself up, and replied, "If you speak to me again, sir, I'll call a policeman!!" I, of course, felt awfully sold.'

'Silly creature,' said Lady Emily. 'Did you ever find out who she was?'

'Not I,' said Algernon.

'Probably,' said Lady Emily, 'she was what is called a young person. In other words, an old maid.'

CHAPTER III.

‘**B**UT, my dear friend, you have never yet answered my question. Why don’t you marry?’

‘I thought that I had, long ago. I can’t go on the incorporate existence tack, and any other is quite out of the question?’

‘Why?’

‘In the first place, I am too old; in the second, I cannot afford to marry the sort of girl I should like to. An old house and three hundred a year. Besides, I should like — let me see — a fair creature some ten years or more younger than myself. Say what you like, women in their affections are truer than men; they do not think so much of personal appearance, except just at first. I should hate the notion of my wife looking old; besides, I am one of those unfortunately popular men, and a wife nearly of my own age would think herself neglected, especially if she had been a beauty; and then she would grow cantankerous and disagreeable. I should never like to marry her unless she had been, or was, a beauty; and only fancy, as Taylor says in his “Notes on Life,” that “though the highest order of beauty is, and cannot but be a most precious possession whilst it lasts, it is as perishable as precious. And if it be our portion to encounter such a beauty, which appears to revive in us the realities from which Raphael and Perugino painted, we are to consider whether to possess such a beauty in marriage, and in it

subjected to the changes and chances of this mortal life, would not bring upon us the same sort of feeling with which we should contemplate a Madonna or a St. Cecilia, hanging exposed to the weather, and losing some tenth part of its form and colouring with each successive winter.”

‘I think, Algernon, I remember the passage. But consider, that though beauty of feature may grow old and withered, mental beauty, displaying itself in expression, never does. Who is it who, speaking of his own experience, declares “how much the wife is dearer than the bride”?’

‘All very well,’ said Algernon; ‘but the old house, and three hundred a year! Well, suppose I meet with a nice girl and three hundred a year at her own disposal, how could we manage? I should hate always seeing my wife in print dresses, and obliged to travel second class; ten children, and a drawing-room like a pig-stye! No, I couldn’t stand it. Three hundred a year! No, Emily, it can’t be done, and no neighbours near the Grange, visitable, without carriage horses. Well, suppose my wife has a large fortune; then one is in fetters, albeit in fetters of gold. No, it won’t do; and then we should quarrel; and she would get into a fury, and say that it was her money, and she would do what she pleased. And I should also get savage; I know I should, and lose my temper, and make some pretty speech as, “Confound it, I wish I had never seen your ugly face.” And Sir Cresswell Cresswell would, I suppose, term that cruelty! No, it can’t be done for the money.’

‘Ah, you men!’ said Lady Emily, ‘you men are all alike; at all events, the Conyers are. Gerald used to go on in the same way after we were married, and then I pretended that my 30,000*l.* was utterly lost, and he was

in an awful state, for then we were very poor. At last he found me out, for I had written a letter to myself; and, like women in general, had done myself by entering too much into detail.'

'Well, now, to change the subject. In the first place, you are just the person any young girl would like to marry, if one could persuade you to sacrifice that hideous flaxen capriole. You are not so tall as Gerald, and are to my mind not so handsome; but probably other people would not think so. (I may be prejudiced.) For a LITTLE man — now, don't be cross; five feet nine is little, compared with Gerald, who is an enormous six feet two or three. "Much too big?" — Well, stop, as I was saying, for a LITTLE man — your figure is perfect; no family is more illustrious, or more highly connected than that of Conyers; your mother was an earl's daughter. Should anything happen to Gerald and Charley, you are next heir to 18,000*l.* a year. Now, remember, don't be always *dispraising* yourself. Remember that one of the shrewdest of men declared, that "men *generally* took a man at his own valuation, and women *always* did." You can give a young lady everything but money. If Gerald can help you in any way, he will.'

'Gerald always was a good fellow, but I am not going to sponge upon him. No, no! Celibacy and three hundred a year, with a boggart for my nearest neighbour.'

'Well, but, Algernon, consider you are not formed for a single life. You are not naturally selfish, certainly; but *one* has to think of *one* alone. A married man has others to think for, others to provide for. His sympathies do not become contracted; he cannot so well become selfish. His very selfishness is tempted to display itself in providing for the happiness of others — of those most dear to him.'

‘Well! well! I will think about it, before I furnish the Grange, and take to my *parsonage*. By-the-bye, I often wonder how it is that the generality of parsons manage to enter the holy estate, and get on somehow or other; and they generally get hold of the nicest girls. I wish they would teach me how they do it.’

‘Well,’ said Lady Emily, ‘a clergyman’s life is comparatively a tranquil one; and as a body, no men live more holy lives, no men’s lives are more closely scrutinised. If other men trip, as they do continually, it passes nine times out of ten unnoticed; but in the case of a clergyman, the whole land rings with it, and liberties are taken by the Radical press with the memoirs of his great grandmother, who has been in her grave for fifty years, and we forget that they are but lights in earthen vessels, men of like passions with ourselves. Whom would you, in five cases out of six, consult in a matter of difficulty, or in time of trouble? Why, the clergyman of your parish, a man generally of good family, well connected, with the charge of an important parish, and 120*l.* per annum (derived, perhaps, from pew-rents), to add to the slender portion of a younger son. Is it reasonable to expect him to marry a lady worth nothing? Look at Lord O’Niel’s son, with a small incumbency of 100*l.* a year, and perhaps 100*l.* a year of his own.’

‘Aye,’ said Algernon, ‘let him marry into his own rank, Lady Susan M’Tavish, and become a father of little ones on three or four hundred a year! Not *I*, “to my knowledge;” “SEEING IS BELIEVING.” By-the-by, did Lord Millington ever tell you of his exploit with the censor of Christ Church, when Cyril Jackson was dean? He went to old Oran the censor for something or other one cold January morning, when some of the men were skating on Mercury (a small pond in the great quadrangle

of Christ Church, in which a statue of Mercury formerly stood).

“Are you aware, Dr. Oran, that the dean is one of the best skaters in Oxford?”

“Indeed!” said Dr. Oran.

“Yes! I assure you he comes out every night at twelve, and skates for half an hour; perhaps you may see him to-night. He thinks it *infra dig.* to skate before the undergraduates.”

At twelve P.M. punctually, the door of the dean’s house opened, and Lord Millington walked out, habited in the dean’s canonicals, with the dean’s butler (to whom he had given a guinea), carrying the skates. Screwing them on, he skated away for a short time, and one or two of his friends who were watching by Dr. Oran’s door, heard the door cautiously unclosed, the censor poked his head out, recognised the canonicals and the old butler, and exclaimed,

“*Bless my heart*, seeing is believing; had I not seen it with my own eyes, I never *could* have believed it.”

“Not a bad story; but what was that other one,” said Lady Emily, “he was telling you when we dined there?”

“Oh, that was a serious affair. Knowing that the high sheriff was always a quarter-of-an-hour before his time, he dressed himself in a scarlet and ermine robe, and started off, to Shotover Hill I think it was, in those days, with four horses, and got there before the sheriff, who received him in great state, with the javelin men and trumpeters, and all that sort of thing. He was splendidly got up, a few wrinkles well painted, in fact he looked quite like an old man, laid down the law most skilfully to the sheriff, who was charmed with him: suddenly it flashed across his mind that the real layers down of the law were probably close behind, although he had a quarter-

of-an-hour's start; so he pretended to be taken most suddenly ill, requested the sheriff to drive as fast as possible to the judge's lodgings, rushed in just in the nick of time, for the judge's carriage followed the sheriff's, threw away gown and wig, and out by the kitchen garden, returning to Christ Church by a circuitous route. You may imagine the row it caused in the university. Lord Millington's grandmother was most conveniently ill, and he started off post-haste to see her; so, wishing to keep her alive for a future emergency, he wrote to the dean saying she was better.'

'Very amusing such jokes are; but when caught, young men have no right complain if made to smart for it.'

'Well,' said Algernon, 'I as a general rule never saw much fun in practical jokes, when the point of the joke consisted in causing annoyance to any one. Poor Lord Millington! a better fellow never existed; after his illness he lost nerve. Who would ever suppose that he had ever been first and foremost in every species of mischief? a thoroughly good-hearted fellow, too.'

'By-the-bye, what were we talking about before I told you that story about Lord Millington? Oh, about the holy estate of matrimony in general, and parsons in particular. Look at Gawaine; what is he? six feet four somewhere about, and that tiny wife of his, four feet six: what is the reason all those out-sizers, as the linen-draper's express it, marry such small women?'

'There was a nice fellow I knew in the 7th, six feet seven, I don't think that his wife was much above five feet, she just came up to his elbow; now why couldn't he, in the name of all that is decent and becoming, marry some one in the Normandy giantess line? a man of six feet surely ought to look out for a wife of six feet two at the very least; if not, who are left for those tall ladies?'

‘Moderately tall men of some five nine, like my neighbour,’ quietly observed Lady Emily.

‘I deny it *in toto*,’ said Algernon.

‘Deny it as much as you please, my dear friend, you will find it turn out so. Stay! I will allow you five feet eight.’

‘Mrs. Gawaine is a pretty creature, but, as they say in the North, knows the length of her husband’s foot.’

‘I suspect, gentle as she is, that he has a grey mare in his stable.’

‘Do you think Gawaine is handsome?’

‘Well, I do for my part,’ said Algernon. ‘I admire that crisp black hair; they used to call him Nigger Conyers at school: and that classical face of his, which, as Josephine used to say of Napoleon, requires no whiskers: when put out I have seen him look like the Olympian Jove himself, as unrelenting and determined. I should have set him down as the beau ideal of a Life-Guardsman, only he never would have been able to raise a moustache. I fancy he took a serious turn when he was about two or three and twenty, knew his own failings, and believed that if he became a military man he would be exposing himself to unusual temptation, and would end in becoming a confirmed *roué*, and now is satisfied with dragooning a parish instead of a regiment.’

‘The Bishop has a great regard for him, and has made him his examining chaplain. His living is I fancy a small one, but the Bishop will, I suppose, do something for him when he has an opportunity.’

‘I often wonder what is to become of most of the curates of the present day, who take holy orders, hoping to live of the Word; and after many years they find themselves with, perhaps, the care of a huge manufacturing parish, and with about the same income as a gentle-

man's butler. Now, with another hundred added to his curacy of one hundred, a man may, as a bachelor, manage to dress neatly, and when he *does* leave home, travel first class. Of course he must not cross a horse's back; he can't afford it. How is he to marry on it — aye, or on double — with the prospect of a parson's family — a round dozen?'

'It is to me a marvel, that young men, younger sons of country gentlemen, with small fortunes, should show such anxiety to take orders. To men of inferior position, to whom it would be a rise in the social scale to be a parson, I can understand.'

'I cannot believe that the generality of young men of good position take orders prepared to renounce all comforts and conveniences of life.'

'Probably they have an idea that a parson's life is really a happy one. They trust to do their duty, work their parishes, and live the swan-on-the-river style of life spoken of in "Sandford and Merton," in the conversation between Tigranes and his mate! For my part, I think that a curate should have a sort of allowance after a certain number of years. Wouldn't I like to have the overhauling of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners' accounts. What do they do with the money? No animal so poor but others prey upon it. Now they waste thousands on bishops' palaces; but as for the smaller livings, precious a bit are they the better off!! The provision should be *suited* to the retired and homely life of the pastor; but sufficient, if *prudently* managed, to make his life in its pecuniary elements easy and untroubled. There should be a pension given, in my opinion, sufficient with their small stipend to enable them, living frugally, to give all or most of their time to those pursuits by which they may best promote those all-important interests committed by

Providence to their care. A clergyman should not be compelled to eke out his income by tuition; he should not be *compelled* to turn schoolmaster, in order to provide for those tender branches which shoot up in the usual course of events. It is not only to secure to him the whole of his time, and the undiverted direction of his endeavours, that it is most desirable that an adequate maintenance should be provided; but as a safeguard to his character and conduct, surely it ought to be unfettered by pecuniary difficulties, with a large family and very slender means; a little behind with his butcher, ditto with his baker; the shoemaker's Christmas bill unpaid, or part paid on account; a long score at the village shop. Well, we may say that a wise man will not be hampered with difficulties, yet the wisdom of the wisest may be weak in action. What is he to do? Is he never to marry? or never to be out of difficulties if he does? Surely we ought, in a pecuniary sense, to give them all needful protection — more even than strictly needful when we consider the national and universal interests depending upon their life and character; for as he is as a man, so will he be as a minister; *as he is* as to his moral, spiritual, intellectual, and practical being, so will he be as to his ministrations.'

'Well, I don't understand it. As the old saying goes, (and a thoroughly mendacious one it is,) "Whatever is right." Only if you catch me marrying on 300*l.* a year and a haunted house, I give you free leave and licence to clap me up into the lunatic asylum to save me from the union workhouse! Perhaps if I were a parson I might think differently. No, my dear Emily,' said Algernon, stroking his orange tawny Crimean hand over hand, a habit now got into when meditative, the custom of pulling down the under lip for the same purpose by the imperial, having gone out of fashion; 'it can't be done for the money, and

that is the plain unvarnished truth. Have you an idea what my tailor's bill comes to, madam ? or my bootmaker's ? to say nothing of hats and gloves, &c. &c. If I marry, would you have me go almost in a state of nature ? Of course you wouldn't. What, then, am I to do ? I shall let half the Grange to a respectable couple, who will do for me in more senses than one.'

'Well, then, a great deal has to be done to the Grange.'

'Oh, I shall do well enough. What an extraordinary old clerk you have here ; and the quire appear to me even more so ; and you use the old edition of Sternhold and Hopkins too. Were you poorly that you were not at church this afternoon ? I wanted to have asked you. By-the-bye, the Colonel must give the man a wiggling. If I were in Gerald's place, I would pack the whole troop of them off. Only fancy, since the poor old rector's death, they evidently consider that they may do what they like with the curate. Now it seems that the leader of the quire and clerk are not on terms. Poor, meek Mr. Smith took no notice of how matters were ; but before the sermon the clerk gave out the psalm (old version)—

'Like as the hart doth pant and bray the water brooks to find.'

Finding that the quire did not respond, he turned round to the gallery, and looking up to the quire, said, "Winna thee go on, lads ?" whereupon the leader of the quire, a stout, red-faced man, with a bald head, leaned over, and in a stage whisper said to the clerk, with a look of indescribable humour, "Nay, lad ; thee mayest pant and bray by thee sel' !" which the clerk at once proceeded to do.'

'I am weary of parish clerks and parish quires. I really think they are the most irreverent creatures on the face of the earth, always excepting singing men at a cathedral.'

‘Do you remember a pretty engraving called, “We praise thee, O Lord!” — three very sentimental little choristers, the biggest very beautiful, a face full of devotion, and the little boy on his right catching the spirit of praise, as it were, from the elder?’

‘All very pretty! but when you consider that that elder boy has been, in all probability, pinching the little boy during the first lesson, till he can scarcely *sit* in comfort, and has threatened him with a sound thrashing after the service, it rather deteriorates from the beauty of the engraving, and a pretty thing it is too.’

‘I was, I remember, when quartered in a certain cathedral city, a witness of such a scene. So I had a bit of talk with my friend the dean. He took the matter up with a high hand. I also remember one of the singing men taking umbrage at something or other, throwing up his situation, and accepting an engagement at some low supper-rooms in London, where the songs were as great a contrast to the songs of Sion he had been hitherto accustomed to sing as can well be imagined, and leading a life of fearful irregularity, or rather fearful regularity. You always laugh at my old stories; did you ever hear of the man who declared that he had always led a most regular life, for he had not gone to bed sober for years?’

‘No.’

‘Well, I tell you, a friend of mine, a clergyman, told me (I suspected at the time that it was a regular Joe Miller), that late one night he was sent for by a dying man. He went at once. There, on a miserable bed, in a most untidy room, lay a squalid figure.

“Oh, your reverence, I knew you would come to see me once more; it is for the last time! I shall not trouble you long.”

“Oh, Smithson! Smithson!” said my friend, “I

always knew how it would end! This terrible vice — degrading a man below the very beasts that perish! — I long knew, had marked you only too surely for its victim. Here are the fruits of an irregular life!”

“IRREGULAR!” said the poor man; “not irregular, sir; I have been drunk regularly every night for the last ten years.”

‘Oh,’ said Lady Emily, ‘now, haven’t you just invented it?’

‘No, I haven’t, and if you will persist in shunting yourself upon my line in this way, you will cause a collision before long.’

‘Well, I won’t interrupt you again; so go on.’

‘My friend felt very much provoked, thinking that poor Smithson was joking; but he soon saw that he was not.’

“Well, Smithson, many years ago, I remember you as fine a young man as one would wish to see, and your wife the prettiest and the nicest girl in the town. Here are you lying in a room like a dog-kennel, your wife all in rags, no furniture in the room, the paper hanging in tatters from the walls, the window stopped up with dirty rags; but, not to speak of higher motives, to one who, like yourself, has few and fleeting hours before him, a short time, indeed, to make his peace with his Maker, what can I say to you? To take a lower ground, you once had a good business; why did you leave it?”

“Why, you see, sir, it was my business that did it. My brother and I both belonged to a temperance affair; he was the lecturer, and I was the frightful example.”

‘Can’t you imagine the scene? The lecturer, in forcible language, denouncing the iniquities, and the frightful example crossing the stage, a wretch with scarcely a vestige of humanity left him. Now, I have a great respect for

temperance societies, and think that they have done a great deal of good, and those who cannot restrain themselves, I should decidedly advise them to join them; but why, for the sake of a few, compel the majority to give up their glass of wine at dinner in moderation, or their glass or two of beer? I usually drink two or three glasses of wine every day, and I consider that it does me good. And so long as I find it answer, I shall continue to do so. If my neighbour agrees with me in taking his two or three glasses, and finds benefit from so doing, why should I hermetically seal up his decanter? No, I don't see why the majority should give up everything to the minority: this is not the sort of legislation that pleases me.

‘ This is one of my objections to legalise the marriage with a deceased wife's sister. Why, to please a few, are we all to be made uncomfortable? There are many instances of these marriages. I would undertake to find twice as many instances of bigamy, and ten times as many of adultery, yet surely no man would wish to sanction either. Is a woman to marry her late husband's brother? This is not contemplated, because we legislate for men, and not for women; but if we prohibit this, and say that what is not forbidden is allowed, as a woman is forbidden to marry two brothers in the Bible, we forbid it also; but because there is no direct prohibition to marry two sisters, are we then to allow it? If so, we virtually maintain, by a parity of reasoning, that though a man may not covet his neighbour's wife, a woman MAY covet her neighbour's husband. No! if a man must, let him do it boldly. *Pecca fortiter* must be his motto. “ Let him marry his grandmother like a man.” Why is the law to be altered, because (as the *Times* well observes) he wants to marry the only woman in the world the law

won't allow him to marry? No, it can't be done.* A man will next consider it a hardship that he cannot marry his niece. As to your uncle's widow, of course you may. What, marry your brother's widow, and not marry your uncle's or your nephew's!!! Aye, leave the laws alone as they now stand, otherwise it will only get us into trouble.'

'What a time Gerald is! He must find Robinson a far pleasanter fellow than it has been my luck to find him. I suppose Robinson has money to pay him to smooth matters.'

'Well,' said Lady Emily, 'what we should have done unless Gerald had always been careful in small matters, with the small income we had when we first started in life, I cannot imagine; but who is so noble as Gerald in great matters? Besides, one is always prepossessed in favour of a man who comes to pay us money. And yet, Algernon, we were, I think, happier on our small means than we have ever been since. People make a great mistake in delaying when they have a competency.'

'By-the-bye,' said Algernon, 'as you have managed to track back again to that favourite subject of yours, which I had hoped was already thoroughly ventilated, *apropos* to marriage, I can tell you a curious anecdote an old woman told me, when I went to see the parish church when quartered in Lancashire. Strolling about the churchyard, I found an old woman, and sent her for the key. Whilst opening the door, a rough-looking individual passed through the churchyard, dressed somewhat like a weaver.

'“Dost thee see yon felley?” says she; “he's the

* It has been well stated, that the husband in this case would have but *one mother-in-law*, and this advantage is by no means to be lightly esteemed.

wickedest felley onywheere. He had two wives at same time; a wick un and a deed un!"*

"A what?" cried I.

"A wick un and a deed un. Dunnot thee know what I say? art thee hard of hearing, felley?"

"Oh, I understand you," said I, not having a notion really what she meant.

"Felley's wife died, and hoo † began to cry out for the earth, and he had nobbut five shilling to put her out of the way with; and he thought and thought. 'Eh!' says he, 'maybe Betty Lord will lend me th' brass.' In he went and axed her; and hoo said, 'Nay, I'll lend thee no brass o' mine, less thou 'lt wed me,' says hoo. 'I'll wed thee to-morrow,' says felley. 'Nay, thou 'lt wed me before thou hast brass o' mine.' So hoo was wed at th' ould church! And hoo found brass for the licence! and for th' funeral! and hoo put on black! and hoo went to th' funeral, and hoo helped to put her under ground respectable; and they telled none till th' funeral was over, and then they went back to the town. Heigh, he's the wickedest felley onywheere's about"!!'

'Don't you understand what she meant?' said Lady Emily.

'Not I,' said Algernon.

'A wick 'un and a deed 'un: a wick, or living one, and a dead one.'

'The man married before the poor woman was buried!' said Algernon. 'However, it was explained by my friend. "*To be sure hoo was th' ould sweetheart!!!*" The woman had been *done by him* before, and was not to be *done* a second time by the same person. Well, after showing me the church, she turned round and said —

* Deed *quasi* dead — quick and dead. † In Lancashire *hoo* is used for *she*.

“Dost thee know Wrington, felley?”

“Nay,” said I, having acquired a touch of the lingo.

“My old man said there was a gradely gait of preaching going on there, and axed me to go. ‘What mak’ o’ man is he?’ said I. ‘Eh, he’s a gradely fine, clever, nice chap,’ said he. So I went wi’ him. But the felley didn’t come, and a woman expounded. So hoo got up.”

“Who?” said Lady Emily.

“Oh,” said Algernon, “hoo is Lancashire for she.

“So hoo got up, and hoo did preach gradely. ‘Eh, see the wicked one,’ said hoo. ‘I’ve cast him out,’ hoo said. ‘I seed him under th’ benches,’ hoo said; ‘and he’s scrattling at the windows with his long claws.’

“So I turns me to a nice respectable lad near, ‘Heigh, says I, ‘does th’ ould felley come here *regular*?’

“‘Nay,’ says he, ‘we’re chosen vessels here.’

“‘Heigh,’ says I, ‘a many’s a queer mak’ o’ vessels for chosen ones. How doest thee know thee art a chosen one, heigh?’

“‘Minister found it and told us.’

“‘Dunno thee think thee art a very dirty vessel? thee aint the mak’ o’ chosen vessels. And so th’ ould felley doesn’t come here *regular*?’

“‘Nay,’ said he; ‘but hoo says hoo seed him under the benches; and hoo says hoo cast him out; and hoo says hoo seed him scrattling with his long claws on the window. Hoo says hoo did.’

“‘Nay,’ says he; ‘th’ ould felley doesn’t come here. No, never,’ says he.

“Says I, ‘You’re all liars.’ Says I, ‘Thee says one thing and hoo says anither. Th’ ould felley may be here; but I’ll tell thee the truth, the LORD isn’t amongst ye.’ So I starts me home.”

“I laughed immensely, to the old woman’s huge satis-

faction, and turned to leave the church, and offered her half-a-crown. To my surprise she stoutly refused it.

‘ “Nay, lad,” said she. “What with stoppages, thee pay isn’t gradely much. Put up thee brass, lad! put up thee brass; thee’ll want more than an ould body like me. Doest thee know my lad,” said she, “who’s in India?”

‘ “What’s his name?” said I.

‘ “What do they call him?” says she. “Why they calls him Billy o’ Jack’s, o’ Bill’s, o’ Tom’s. Doest thee know him, felley?”

‘ “Nay,” said I, for I had got quite into the vernacular. Well, I asked my servant, a Lancashire lad, when I came.

‘ “Heigh, it’s mysell,” cried he. “And hoo’s my ould granny.”

‘ Well,’ said Lady Emily, ‘but where is the meaning of that extraordinary genealogy?’

‘ Why,’ said Algernon, ‘amongst the lower order there are only about four surnames to somewhere about a million of individuals, so that William Lord, the son of John (or Jack) Lord, the son of William Lord, senior, who was the son of Tom Lord, becomes (there being about 500 Lords in the neighbourhood) Billy o’ Jack’s, o’ Bill’s, o’ Tom’s. The lad married and left the army; I met him when last in Lancashire, and asked him how he was getting on, hoping at the same time that he and his wife did not quarrel.’

‘ “Did you ever hear o’ th’ two cocks, sir?” said he. “A lad was looking out o’ the window, and he see’d a cock who looked gradely bad for sure! an’ th’ other cock came up. ‘Heigh,’ says he, ‘how’s a’ wi’ you?’ ‘Cock a doodle doo: Missis is *maister here*,’ said the first

cock, as if he had found out what he didn't fancy. 'Cock a doodle doo,' said th' other, comforting him like; 'hoo's *maister everywhere!!*'"

'Well, Algernon, but for a man who has conscientious scruples against matrimony, your thoughts certainly do appear somewhat to tend that way. Most frequently, as leader of the opposition! you speak of matrimony under protest, still nevertheless you do speak of it.'

'Now, please stop one minute; I have just one request to make of you. Now, will you grant it?'

'Well, it depends on circumstances.'

'Now promise.'

'No, I won't! What, buy a pig in a poke? Never.'

'You may promise it readily, and it will be a great comfort to me.'

'Well, what is it, please? No more of the old house, with the boggart and the income of 300*l.* a year.'

'Well, I am a stupid fellow, I daresay. I am, I fear, a man merely of one idea, not what you ladies like, an imaginative man!! No *poetry* in me: no soul! About as much romance as in an oyster. I once saw Carlotta Grisi spring across the stage, playfully pointing her foot at the gods in the gallery.'

"There's poetry," exclaimed an elderly gentleman next to me, in a great state of admiration.

"Where?" said I.

"There," said he; "are you blind, man?"

"Ah," said I, "what style of poetry, trochaic?"

"No," said he, in a fury. "Poetry of motion."

"But she keeps her leg *still*," said I.

'So he looked at me furiously, as if he would have eaten me without salt (as our old saying was at Harrow). No! as I said before, there is no *poetry* in me. There is no *romance*! no *nothing*! as Topsy says.'

‘No romance! No romance in you! Pray, what made you a light dragoon then, extraordinary man that you are? I thought that a light dragoon was all romance. The long spurs and the terrible implement of warfare which he carries under his arm, as careless as if it possessed the primæval innocence of an umbrella, and the coquettish little cap, with the gold band, worn on the left eyelid, or dangled from the forefinger! No romance in you! Man! man! why did you ever become a light dragoon?’

‘Well, I don’t know,’ said Algernon. ‘What would you have me become? An M.D., “Parson of the Parish,” “or the attorney!!!” as Canning says, in “The Needy Knife-Grinder.” For the first I have not nerve, medical students are my abomination (not that I ever meet them), though how they ever emerge from the chrysalis state and spring up into the noble set of men they show themselves to be as a class, is to me a perfect marvel; whether it is that a constant and intimate acquaintance with trouble and suffering has a softening influence on the heart, I don’t know. I suppose it must have. Now, as to parsons: of them you have already had my opinion; it is not my vocation, in short. Now, as to attorneys: that would not at all do: business would be as bad. In my peculiar temperament it would have proved ruin. “He that hasteth to become rich hath an evil eye,” saith King Solomon. Do you remember the story of Alleyn, the founder of Dulwich College? At the theatre one day he fancied he saw the devil looking immensely amused at his acting; he at once gave up the stage, with its varied temptations, declaring that he was not caught yet! and, having amassed a handsome fortune, founded Dulwich College. In all probability he had long been undecided about retiring from public life, and perhaps a disordered fancy supplied the rest. So a friend of mine one day astonished all his

friends by suddenly retiring from a most lucrative business upon a moderate competency, observing that he did not wish to sacrifice the next world to this.'

'Well,' said Lady Emily, 'I should greatly respect a man who did so. He may have acted rightly in fleeing from what, in his case, would have proved too strong a temptation. His was an exceptional case. God has given us great riches; I don't see that they have either corrupted or deadened Gerald or myself. We have been enabled to bear the sudden change. We never cared much about money, either of us. We married on a competency; it would have been perfectly unjustifiable not to have done so. People who marry on really insufficient means indulge their own selfish feelings, and marry on their friends as it were. No means are really sufficient which will not provide for the decent maintenance and education of olive branches. But, Algernon, you have quite omitted the attorneys.'

'Ah, well,' said Algernon, 'I should not like to have the fingering of so much loose cash of my neighbour's. I should perhaps have been tempted to become a somewhat sharp practitioner. No, it would prove too tantalising, something like doing those long sums at school, of pounds, shillings, and pence. It used to make me feel gloomy. Did I ever tell you a story about my Lancashire lad, relative to an attorney's funeral? Well, we were riding through a town, and we saw what appeared to be a public funeral. I sent him into a shop to inquire, and overheard the following colloquy:—

“What's yon funeral? master wants to know.”

“It's Lawyer Smith's. They call him the honest lawyer about here, and so we have given him a public funeral. We should have shut up our shop before, but have some hatbands and gloves that ought to have gone before.”

“Eh, dear! — what? do you *bury* your attorneys here?”

“Yes, to be sure we do; what would you have us do with them? Why, don’t *you* bury them?”

“Nay; we don’t *bury* them in Lancashire.”

“Not bury them! Why, what do you do with them?”

“Eh! we just leave th’ window open a’ neet (all night), it’s a’ reet by next day.”

“All right by next morning? (said the shopman), what do you mean?”

“It’s a’ reet? Dunno you understand plain English? — a’ reet, a’ gone, man! nout left!”

“What?” replied the shopman, “nothing left! How is that?”

“Eh, dear! doesn’t thee know? They do say sometimes there’s a bit smell, summut loike a *brimstone match* had gone off — but that’s all! Eh, dear! and so they *bury* attorneys here! they do for sure! Eh, what will they say in Owdham?”

‘I was immensely amused, as you may suppose. I rather suspect that he invented it for the occasion, to rile the shopman. He was an amusing fellow, I must say. Poor fellow, he has gone to “that bourne from whence no traveller returns” — *as he went!!!* — whilst I, with my old — oh, by-the-bye, I was nearly forgetting — How does Charley get on at Eton?’

‘Oh, pretty well, all things considered; he is a manly boy, and I do not think that he is over-mannish.’

‘Well,’ said Algernon, ‘one thing must be said in favour of Eton boys, they are gentlemen, there is no mistaking them; the only thing to be said against them is a sort of affectation in speaking of Eton as though it were everything. In my young days at Oxford they

used to profess a wish to be back again at Eton — Oxford was *slow*; there was always something going on at Eton, some fun *there* at all events. To me Oxford was delightful; I can imagine the change a perfect elysium to any school-boy. Fancy *leaving* school, a lad of eighteen, hitherto cooped up in a gloomy quadrangle the greater part of a winter's day, allowed perhaps to go into the town or country for about an hour or so during the day, then some six hours or more in school, then the preparation for school. In summer far worse; on a half holiday (two a week), confined to a cricket field, fine fun for those who liked the game, a perfect *nuisance* to those who did not. In winter on a half holiday we could go out into the *town*, or take long walks into the country, all very well; but in summer returning at six to a sort of thick bread-and-butter tea in half-pint cups, then a lounge through the fine old schools and quadrangle, then evening school from 7 to 9, exercises and themes to be written in the play hours. Oh, how I *hated* this sort of thing! Then going up to Oxford and being one's own master, fifty pounds in one's pocket to start with and unlimited credit, two hours' lectures in the course of the day, anything one chose to order for breakfast or luncheon, the gentlemanly dinner in hall compared with a school dinner, the grand old silver candelabra harmonising well with the saddle-of-mutton style of bachelor dinner; then the wine party after, pretty well in its way, but being uncontrasted with school-days, it offered no temptation to indulge. Port and sherry decidedly bad after one's home experiences; claret palpably *ordinaire* in everything but price; then the stroll down to the boats in the delicious summer evenings; then tea in one's own rooms, perfection of comfort with the grand old Oriel window, with its dais and sofa, and its table holding just eight; that never-to-be-forgotten old room, with its shabby carpet, its book-cases, its easy chairs, with evident marks of

wear; its scout's closet, which represented a sort of custom-house, or rather office on the Ecclesiastical Commissioners' system, into which many waifs and strays found their way, never to be heard of more; then the exaggerated though necessary etiquette observed between young men; the civility and courtesy of college tutors, a trifle petrified, it must be acknowledged; and more than all, the feeling that you are for the first time looked upon as a man, no longer a schoolboy, but a man, held to be such and responsible as such. Well, well! those were the happiest days of my life.

'Is that Gerald's new gardener? I thought so; he was once with Lord Etherington at Salcome, where the celebrated Joe Stiggars tabernacled. "Holy Joe," as they termed him, was a very great scoundrel; one of those men who do incalculable damage to religion generally, by setting forth some extraordinary doctrines; people follow them wildly to have their "itching ears" scratched and lubricated, and in the end, finding these men out to be rank impostors, end by doubting the efficacy of religion itself. Just call the man, I should like to have a word with him: Oh, never mind, he has seen us, and is coming here for something or other. Johnson his name is, isn't it?'

'Well, Johnson, what show of pinks shall you have for the horticultural meeting at Belton?'

'Well, my lady, I think that we shall do pretty well this year; last year was a bad one. I think we'll sweep the country with our flowers; but the Colonel, my lady, must alter the pits considerably before we can do much. Now at my lord's down in Cornwall, when I came he made a regular fresh set of pits on a new plan quite. Eh, dear, they were fine pits once.'

'By-the-bye, Johnson,' said Algernon, 'what has become of my old friend Holy Joe, who was once a flourishing plant in these regions? Weren't you once a follower of his?'

‘ Well, Major, I knew the man.’

‘ But,’ said Lady Emily, ‘ were you not a Stiggarite ? ’

‘ I won’t deny it, my lady ; I was.’

‘ Well, but, Johnson, what led to a breaking off of the acquaintance ? ’

‘ Well, my lady, you see, my lady, it was the office (the prophet called it the *privilege*) of the deacons to entertain him on Sunday. Howsoever, the two deacons were from home, so he comes to me.’

‘ “ Brother Johnson, as an elder, and much bethought of, it is your *privilege* to day to entertain your prophet.”

‘ “ Very well,” said I, feeling dumbfounded, my lady ! So I gets home to my wife, tells her the prophet’s coming, and inquires what there is for dinner.

‘ “ Oh, my dear,” says she, “ what can we do ? There’s nothing but a small beefsteak pie ; only just enough for two, and no more.”

‘ “ Well, the prophet’s coming to-day,” says I, “ and no mistake about it whatever. Boil two pounds more pertaties,” says I. Well, the prophet comes, and he sits himself down, and he helps himself to the pie, taking nearly half of it. Me and my wife makes a pretence of taking a helping, and tries the pertaties with gravy ; but I looks up and sees that he had not touched the pertaties.

‘ “ Mr. Stiggars,” said I, “ won’t you try the pertaties ? ” So he lays down his knife and fork slowly, and looking me full in the face —

‘ “ Brother Johnson,” says he, in a very grave voice, “ he who can’t eat this here excellent beefsteak pie without any pertaties, ought never to have another ! ” With that he helps himself to all that was left, me and my missis having not had a bit of it.’

‘ Well, Johnson,’ said Lady Emily, ‘ the funds must be raised in one way or another ; and, perhaps, there are worse ways than paying tithes towards a minister’s sub-

sistence. I dare say Mr. Stiggars thinks himself quite in the right. Having no establishment, as he would term it, he finds it necessary to take tithe in kind instead of by commutation.'

'Well,' said Algernon, 'when I was at Bilston I had a long conversation with a wealthy manufacturer about tithes.

"I am aware," said he, "that all the Church ministers are not paid by the State any more than our own ministers. With regard to your bishops that is a different thing."

"What on earth do you mean?" said I. "Surely you don't suppose for one moment that the State pays our bishops?"

"Do you mean to say that it doesn't?"

"Most decidedly," said I, for I had been having a long discussion with Gawaine, who is well up in the matter. "Now, look here, we will say nothing about the clergy being paid by the State—that you know to be untrue; but as to the bishops, I could give you fifty proofs. But to take one solitary instance—the first that occurs to me. Now what is the income of the diocese of Chester? it is under five thousand a year. Do you know what Durham was? some thirty thousand a year. Do you suppose that if the State paid, such a glaring anomaly could exist? The Bishop of Chester has, or had, nearly three times as much to do, and only about one-sixth of the pay."

"Where do they get their pay from?" said he.

"From their estates," said I.

"And they get their estates from the *people*," said he, "and the people have a right to recall them."

"Just as you get your money from the people," said I, "at so much a spindle, which they have an equal right to recall."

"They may call for it till they are tired," observed my friend, with a cool grin on his face, "and I wish they

may get it then. By-the-bye," said he, "where do you get your tithes from? the Reformation, I suppose?"

' "We had," said I, "our tithes long before any Reformation was necessary. I don't know when tithes were first established in England; but they were in full force in the year 600. I will now explain to you the anomalies in the varying sizes of parishes. This was the origin of the parochial system: the large land proprietors, the lords of the manors, or thanes, as they were called, each man built his church in the most convenient part of his property, and he assigned so many hides of land for the maintenance of the clergyman in addition to the tithes; and it is a very remarkable thing, that in those parts of England where the manors are very large the parish is almost invariably the size of the manor. Take Lancashire, with its enormous manors and huge parishes, some ten or fifteen miles in diameter, and with a population of one hundred thousand people. Then take Somersetshire, with its small parishes of one or two hundred people. Now go through all the parishes of England, and you will find that the manor and the parish are co-extensive, wherever there is a manor." '

' Well, but, Algernon, what answer did you give to your manufacturing friend? How did you reconcile the two bishops or bishoprics? '

' Well, my lady, I will make you *sensible*, as they say in Somerset. I explained to my friend that their revenues were derived from episcopal estates. Chester derives some five thousand a year from *his*. Durham has not only goodly beeves and much mutton, but he has minerals of great value; gold of Ophir, in the Auckland collieries, and precious stones, aye, precious for building purposes, in his numerous quarries. Now, take the clergy. Mr. Jones has a small vicarage in a town of a thousand souls; great tithes, two hundred a year; small tithes,

absurdly small, with a very large glebe, a thousand acres of moor land, which the Rev. gentleman would gladly let at a shilling an acre. However, he perhaps gets a stray grouse now and then in the season, which is shot by a friend, and sent to him (say, five brace, at five shillings a brace), twenty-five shillings a year from one thousand acres! Well, his friend Major Brown, of the Royal Engineers, and his college friend, Professor Robinson, the double first of Jones's year, F.R.S., A.S.S., President of the Geological Society, and half a dozen others, pay him a visit. The three friends, Brown, Jones, and Robinson stroll out over the glebe, situated one or two miles from the town; for Mr. Jones tells his friends that the finest view in all the country is to be had from the top of the hill which bounds his glebe; so they stroll over the hill. Professor Robinson and Major Brown pick up one or two stones, break them, exchange a few words, walk off together, begin to hook up the earth in what appears to be a rabbit's hole, with an extraordinary weapon carried by the Professor, half spud, half battle axe, and of infinite use to him in his geological pursuits. Jones joins them, and not very unreasonably considers that they have both gone mad, as he sees them throwing up showers of a heavy looking, dark red earth. Off they go to the other side of the hill. Major Brown borrows the battle axe, and takes his turn at the diggings, with a similar result.

“What is the matter?” inquires the Rev. Mr. Jones; “what's wrong?”

“Why, the hill is one mass of iron, of the finest possible ore.”

“Indeed,” says the Rev. Mr. Jones, who, having the fear of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners before his eyes, anticipates no very great advantage to himself from the find.

‘What the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in the long

run give Mr. Jones, I cannot tell. Sir Gradient Culvert, the great engineer, starts a company at once, rents the hill at a long lease. Professor Robinson puts his friend, Mr. Jones, in the hands of a good solicitor, who advises him to let all the land on building leases. In a very few years the income of the living amounts to 4,000*l.* a year, and the population to some forty thousand souls; and now the vicar has for some time had a certain amount of elbow-room, his large family are grown up, and he has been able to set them forward in the world. He had married on faith, and had been for many years, no doubt, with a small family increasing upon him, and a very small income, not increasing in proportion, striving to feed, clothe, and bring them up in the position of life in which his heavenly Father has placed him; and now he is actively employed in promoting the building of district churches throughout the parish, which he endows moderately out of the income of his living. But the "Billington Blazer" has had its eye upon him for some time, and he is commanded as a Christian minister to divide the proceeds of his living amongst the forty adjoining small parishes, which Mr. Jones, who having given up all his prospects for the Church, very naturally declines doing. He now feels himself in an equal position, for the first time in his life, with his two younger brothers, who are both in business, and are making large incomes. Mr. Jones feels that he is merely a steward, and that nothing is *really* his own; but considers that a steward has only his Lord and himself to consider, and does NOT equally divide his living amongst the forty neighbouring parishes. Whereupon his name becomes a byword and term of reproach. But here comes the Colonel.' But his further remarks must appear in a chapter by themselves.

CHAPTER IV.

‘ELL, Algernon, he is a queer fellow, but not so bad as you make him out. Why did he give up the Grange farm?’

‘Why,’ replied Algernon, ‘I rather think it was because I sent him off. He paid his rent tolerably well, but he was doing so much mischief in the place; a thoroughly bad fellow. A very pretty young girl came to an untimely end, and as she was his mother’s servant, there were strong suspicions against him, but nothing could be proved: however, he deemed it advisable to go to America for some years.’

‘Where’s Emily?’ said the Colonel. ‘What has happened to the child?’ In great alarm he took the child up in his arms, who cast a piteous glance at Algernon.

‘Here’s the sixpence,’ said he; ‘the bet is won, and off with you.’

‘The man’s a drunkard. I saw him, though he did not suppose it; he drank half the pale brandy, and then galloped off through the park, the short way. I fear he will come to some harm.’

‘Hark! — what is that? — you hear it? There is a horse coming furiously towards us; he funks the burying-place clearly. It is Robinson’s horse, but without the rider! Saddle a couple of horses instantly, and tell two of the grooms to follow us at once.’

Off they set, followed by the grooms, and found poor

Robinson lying on his face by the burying-ground. His head had been badly cut with the fall, and the blood was streaming from the wound. Two or three of the villagers were trying to stop the flow of blood.

‘Let it bleed,’ cried the Colonel; ‘where is Dr. Short? Oh, here he comes.’

‘Good evening, Colonel Conyers; bad case; an inch further back, it must have killed him. Yes, let the blood flow, it will relieve him. The horse must have shied at something in the twilight. Ah, poor fellow, he is coming round again.’

As Robinson faintly opened his eyes, he gasped for breath; they gave him a little wine and he revived; and pointing to the burying-ground, he exclaimed, in a tone of horror, ‘The Conyers’ rabbit!’

There sat an enormous brute, as large as an ox, the rising moon shining on its huge white form, which glistened in the moonlight, thrown into prominent relief by the dark walls of the ruined abbey. Its long lop ears were raised up, and it made futile attempts apparently to get towards them. It then gave vent to such a demoniacal screech, that the whole party bolted except the Colonel, Algernon, and the sick man. The Colonel was very pale. Algernon was at first taken aback; he then burst into a roar of laughter.

‘It’s the lame tinker’s white donkey! Poor wretch, it has slipped its hind quarters into that ditch by the old wall! How it made me shiver! it was exactly like a rabbit in the moonlight, especially when it set up its ears! How weird-like it looked!’

‘The legend appears true enough; but in this case the only mishap has been to the *Conyers’ tenant*. Well, Robinson, you appear able to stand now. William and John will help you down to the Castle, where you had better

remain for the night. Here, some two of you get the poor brute out of the ditch. What a fortunate thing, Algernon, you discovered what it was; not a servant would have remained in the house!

‘Humph!’ said the Colonel to his wife on the following morning, as he had finished his little tour round the breakfast room and had returned from his morning’s parade;—in other words, he usually spent the time his wife was occupied in making tea in letting down and drawing up all the blinds so as to secure perfect symmetry. ‘That blind will never hang straight since you would have those new-fangled things put up; why couldn’t you have left the old rollers and strings as they were? There, I told you so! (as the string gave way, bringing the blind down with a run)—you always mismanage everything;’ and in not the best of humours, he began to do a little in the acrobat line, by mounting a sort of supplementary pyramid, formed of three chairs, with one standing upon the three. With some difficulty he mounted to the top, and from his elevation saw that the small gate at the end of the rhododendron walk was wide open.

‘If there is a thing I dislike, it is having that gate left wide open—all night, too, I suppose. Jervis is becoming intolerably careless. I must have a fresh gardener; in fact, I’ll make a clean sweep of the whole troop. Oh, Mary! have you left the gate open? Uncle Algernon, was it? Going out fishing, too. He’ll do nothing to-day; too bright; wind in the west; rain too during the night;—perhaps he may, though. How a sensible man can pass his time wandering by the river side, thrashing the water with a long line and a feather at the end of it, I could never make out. A man, too, making a devil of himself, and deluding poor wretched fish to their ruin!—and Algernon, too, of all men!’

From these few expressions, it may be inferred that the Colonel was not in the best of humours. The truth was, he had taken cold the previous night; and, in addition to this, the head groom had sent in to say that Paladin was dead lame with the previous evening's work. His first impression was, that the *groom* had ridden him, and he at once declared his determination to get rid of him. Calling to mind that he had himself ridden Paladin, he anathematised his bad luck, and wished that the Conyers' rabbit might carry him off bodily if ever he started again on such a Tom Fool's errand.'

'Why do you pour out the tea so soon?' said he to his wife, who was watching him with just the slightest trace of a smile on her sweet face; 'it will be stone cold. What are you going to do to-day?'

'I have a little drive in prospect, and a little surprise for Algernon. I am going to the station this morning with the ponies, to meet Pen, who is coming to spend a month with us.'

'Ah, a little surprise for Algernon,' said the Colonel, sarcastically articulating each word in a sort of staccato manner. 'A little surprise for me too, and none of the pleasantest. You KNOW I hate that confounded tabby of an old aunt of hers. Why on earth did you ask her? Very well. Remember, I go to Torquay this very day; and that place, too, will be as hot as an oven!!'

'Miss Gumps is *not* coming, my dear Gerald. And as to dear Pen's coming, if anybody has a right to complain, I have; for you flirt with my little goddaughter dreadfully. It's shameful, sir; it is indeed; but, remember, I'll keep an eye upon you — I'll Mrs. Caudle you, I will.'

The Colonel gave a grim smile. 'Well, it is a shame to be out of humour such a morning as this, and with such

a wife, too !' and he sat himself down to his breakfast without a trace of his former ill humour. To be sure, he did suddenly remember that Gawaine would probably call that day ; and Gawaine, too, had a peculiarly aggravating way of taking up the George and Dragon sword, turning it over in the most supercilious manner, and laying it down in contemptuous silence. The Colonel's fingers always tingled on such occasions. So the Colonel eat his breakfast cheerfully, and then walked out of the room with his hands in his pockets. ' It is a shame to be out of humour on such a morning, and with such a wife, too,' and he began humming some sickly sentimental ballad which had been in vogue when he was first engaged to Lady Emily.

So Lady Emily started off to meet her young friend ; and as she looked at the old castle, with its gloriously-tinted old walls, with its picturesque turrets and pinnacles carved into grotesque shapes, the old park with its magnificent old oaks and elms, she thought she had much to be thankful for ; and she looked into the carriage to see if the basket with the first grapes of the season had been placed there for the poor girl in the village dying of consumption ; and then she looked at the long low phaeton and the four greys, with the two little postilions in their well-fitting leathers, with the badges worked in scarlet and gold on the sleeves of their blue jackets ; and as she inhaled the soft fragrant summer air, she mused on the different conditions of life assigned by Providence. Here was she, with every blessing that wealth could bestow ; with good health, too, and everything that could make life enjoyable ; and she thought again of the poor girl in the neighbouring village, and she felt very thankful for the blessings that she enjoyed, and trusted that, if they

were removed from her, she also might have strength afforded her to bear her losses with resignation.

Presently the carriage stopped at a long low cottage, the walls covered with green lattice-work, over which roses had been trained, and which were now in full flower. She got out, and went up into the sick girl's room. It was beautifully neat ; but to one coming in from the fresh air it felt painfully close. The poor girl's eyes flashed with excitement, and her cheek mantled with blushes.

‘ How kind of your ladyship to come again so soon ! I feel far weaker.’

‘ Look, Alice, what a basket of flowers I have brought you ; but the room is sadly too hot for you ; there is a board, too, in the chimney ; that should not be. See, now, that is better. Have you any water here ? Oh, there is that vase. Now, I ’ll put the flowers in the window for you in water. Now try some of these grapes.’

The sick girl eat two or three eagerly, but they appeared to pall on her taste, and she laid them down again.

‘ Mother has gone to the doctor for some stuff ; she ’ll be back soon. Are you going to read to me, my lady ?’

Lady Emily told her that she had started an hour earlier than usual so as to have time to spare. ‘ Did you like the raspberry vinegar ?’

‘ I thought it was sherry wine, my lady, and drank it all at once last night. I heard the angels singing to me all night ; oh ! it was beautiful to hear them. So you see, my lady, it will not be for long before I go home. I prayed over all the hymns I learnt at the Sunday school, and it served to while away the time, and I seemed the more contented and happier in my mind ; I have no wish to stop. I took the sacrament on Sunday : the parson

came very often last week. No money, my lady, thank you, these flowers are more than money.'

'Well, Mrs. King,' said Lady Emily, as she met the mother at the entrance of the garden, 'poor Alice seems very weak to-day.'

'Yes, my lady, but she takes up most of one's time; there's a deal to do.'

'Well, Mrs. King, it will not be for long, it will not be for long: a few days will make a great change in her.'

'Ah, my lady, it is a great expense.'

'Well, I fear you must find it so; here is something for you; I am sure you must be very much harassed.'

'Well, she's gone,' said the old crone, as Lady Emily went away; 'she gae'd me ten shillings; what would a sovereign been out of her pocket? She'll find it out one of these days, when her riches shuts her out from the kingdom.'

'Well,' thought Lady Emily, 'I shall have just time to go and see widow Harvey; she is a sad old creature; poor meek Mr. Smith, the curate, had no chance, she soon sent him to the right-about. Well, she will hardly be rude to me; I must bear it if she is. Poor Alice! oh, how empty do mere earthly comforts feel at such an hour!'

'Well, widow Harvey, how are you to-day?'

'Well, my lady, I have had a deal of company of late. First come'd the parson; why doesn't he mind his own wife, and not trouble a poor old body like me? I told him so, my lady, I gave him a bit of my mind, that I did, I warrant it. You don't find my lady (says I) tramping the country about, to rake up every little bit of scandal against a poor old body. Aye, if you were all no worse than me you might be thankful; I never do no harm to

nobody ; I reads my Bible, my lady, I do. It would be a blessed world if all were like me.'

'Oh, widow Harvey, how can you say such dreadful things? Remember your past life : why *will* you make US call it to mind? that poor miserable man with whom you were living only a few years ago, and who came to such a fearful end: you, too, who had a good husband; he was, indeed, widow Harvey, and he loved you well: as keeper, too, he had good wages, and the gentlemen who came to shoot always made him handsome presents; you broke his heart by your conduct. Now, don't think that I am talking to you as if I were above all power of sinning, I feel my own deficiencies too deeply. In the sight of a holy God we are all sinners; we are told in His Word that He charges even His angels with folly; and to hear you talk about this world's being a blessed world if all were like you — oh! it is dreadful! The Almighty has placed us in these positions, and you and I occupy them according to His pleasure. In His sight, I doubtless am a great sinner.'

Poor Lady Emily! The old woman's eyes gleamed with savage exultation, she sprang up in her bed.

'Eh, I always said your leddyship was a bad 'un, you looked so *innocent*!'

Lady Emily reached the train in not the best of humours; it is not pleasant to be snubbed by one's dependents, and utterly discomfited, when, too, one is in the right; but she could not retain her displeasure at the sight of that sweet young face, radiant with joy, at meeting her.

'Well, dearest Pen, so now you have come for a **REALLY** long stay; I shall not part with you in a hurry. *In* with you, love, for we are rather late; one of the men will

bring your things in a cart. Have you brought your horses? We'll have such rides:' and off they dashed, followed by one of the grooms driving her maid in the whitechapel.

CHAPTER V.



O Algernon, after he returned home on Sunday night, went at once to bed, but did not get much rest. He dreamed of the Grange, and of his old favourite Penelope Blunt, as he last saw her, a romping merry child of thirteen, with short petticoats, and an immense amount of leg. She came to him weeping and wringing her hands; she had a request to make, her life depended on his granting it; would he pledge himself to grant it? He did so: a deep voice behind him repeated his words, and there, dressed as a monk, was the Conyers rabbit.

‘Algernon Conyers,’ said the child, ‘you have wrecked the peace of mind of my beloved aunt Tabitha, and you must make her full reparation,’ and she led the spinster forward by the hand, dressed in black; on her head he noticed a head-dress she used to wear, with lilies of the valley, the flowers formed by little gilded bells, and as she moved her head, the bells, to Algernon’s mind, rang a muffled peal. Tabitha Gumps looked older and more cantankerous than ever; the Conyers rabbit in a solemn voice repeated the words, better and worse, for evermore, for evermore, and proceeded to join their hands. Miss Gumps’s hand felt like the hand of a corpse: she threw her other arm round his neck, and gave him a conjugal salute: in his horror he awoke. It was broad daylight, a lovely summer’s morning; he looked at his watch, it was just six o’clock. It had been raining, but had cleared up;

his left hand ached with the cold, and from the marks on it he found that he had been grasping it firmly with the right. He jumped up, and resolutely dashing into his shower bath, came out dripping like a water god.

‘Well, I never was cupped,’ said he; ‘but it must be something like a shower-bath, with salt and water on the freeze! What a lovely morning!’

Tibbits, too, declared that he had seen a six-pound trout in the Nun’s pool. Well, even three pounds would be a decent-sized fish.

So he hurried on his things, and set off on his travels. Everything looked lovely. The rhododendron walk was perfect, and as he strolled onwards, over the soft green sward, he thought that some ten thousand a year would guarantee certain comforts. ‘Emily was right,’ said he, ‘it will be a desperate nuisance living alone in the old Grange. Well, the lot falleth into the lap; we all have our paths marked out, and he is wisest who walks on his without murmuring.’

‘What on earth had induced him to dream of Miss Gumps, of all people? With her the Grange would be a perfect bear garden, with Miss Gumps for bear-warden, and 300*l.* a year. What could be done on 300*l.* a year? At one time he had thought differently, and had indeed written one or two letters to the “Times” on the subject, clearly proving that not merely olive branches would be provided for, but comforts, aye luxuries, would be forthcoming. But since then. Aye! Blanche had told him plainly, that she, with her 10,000*l.*, could not afford to marry any one with a similar fortune, and had married an elderly viscount, with a large fortune and six young children, to whom she made an exemplary mother.’

‘“Go into the city, dear Algernon, and set your his-

torical name and high connexions against so many millions of antibilious pills, or a few thousand tons of James's powder. Say you marry an earl's daughter with 10,000*l*. What is it? Besides, we are cousins, and it would never answer.

'Don't sell yourself for beauty, and you may yet meet with plenty, if you care about that sort of thing; but look out for some young thing, a dozen years or so your junior, one in whose society you would always wish to be, and who would be your favourite companion. You laugh at what you call my old viscount; he is only twenty-five years older than I am. He is not handsome, but he is sterling, Algernon. You are equally so, I own: but who is there equal to him in point of talent and conversational powers? How he is idolised by his children! Jealous of them! Not a bit of it. Why should I? All will be well provided for out of his enormous personalty, including any "*futures*." Now, don't look shocked, Algernon. You know you are like a brother, and I am eight and twenty, and have not stood the wear and tear of ten or eleven seasons for nothing.'"

So he moved on, and just as he had passed through the gate, he became aware of a small figure in the distance following him. His wrath was at once excited. 'Here's that little beggar again. I told him last time I'd put him into the river, if he came again. Charlie, go home!!!' He vanished at once, and Algernon went on. When he arrived at the next gate, he turned round. There was his persecutor sitting down, about fifty yards off. Algernon bolted after him, but it was not the least use; so he walked on quietly to the lodge, desiring them to secure the lad. So the old woman, who had been his nurse, clutched him up, pretty much as a cat does her

kitten, carried him upstairs, and locked him in. So Algernon went on his way, triumphing.

When he arrived at the Nun's pool, and had got his rod in order, a small voice behind him, on the other side of the river, observed,

‘Tibbits says there’s a six-pound trout in the hole.’

‘Oh, you are there, are you? very well. How did you get out?’

‘I pretended to set the room on fire, and when she came in, slipped out, and locked HER in.’

‘You will be hanged some day, unless you turn over a new leaf. Well, you are proof against drowning; so come along.’

‘Look, uncle, look! here is the black bull again, who tossed the butcher last week, and drove you up into the tree, where, as Farmer Robinson said, you looked like a bull frog, as you swelled with indignation. Have you brought your revolver, as you said you would? Knew you wouldn’t; here it is, catch! So Algernon thankfully caught the weapon, and calmly awaited his foe’s arrival, who came close to him, and sniffed at the revolver most suspiciously, then retreated, and amused himself by polishing his horns in the earth.

‘Gerald’s favourite bull, what am I to do? Well, I’ll try it.’ So out of his book he took three snaps for pike fishing, fastened them together, forming a weapon of offence about two feet long, with about twenty treble hooks attached, some two inches in diameter; he fastened it to the end of his flyline, and pitched it neatly over the bull’s back. The bull gave a loud yell of agony, and not connecting the event in any way with Algernon, dashed off, tail straight on end, Algernon running with all his might; the winch of the reel spinning round, with anything but a pleasant whirr. On he went, taking his

fences flying in gallant style; Algernon tearing after him to save his tackle. Charley lay on his back, *howling* with delight!

Algernon had made 'a little money,' as he termed it, some years ago, by running against time; and he was now in capital condition, thin as a herring, active still as a cat, and as hard to kill; but he never had such a race. His watch and guard he had left at the first hedge, a pocket and skirt attached, at the second. His cap, a light green velvet plush, with deep shade, was somewhere in a ditch, and his Crimean beard somewhat roughly combed by the thorns of the bullfinch. Through the river they returned, almost over Charley, who was too exhausted with laughing to move out of the way. Algernon slipped and fell. The bull gave a yell of agony as the hooks tore out; and the butcher informed the Colonel afterwards that, meeting the bull accidentally, half an hour afterwards, where he least expected to find him, in the fields with his pigs, much startled, he cracked his pig whip, from some sudden impulse, and the bull, instead of again attacking him and treeing him, rushed furiously through the nearest fence, and he lost sight of him.

'Well, Charley,' said Algernon, 'I am done. Now don't stand sniggling at your unfortunate uncle, you unmannerly cub! Take off the pike-snap; put on a short collar and one of Jones's green-drakes. I never saw such a morning. That will do,' he observed, as the fly pitched like a thistle-down on the water and floated along.

'I've got him,' as they saw a splash in the water and a golden side turned up, that glanced like a flash of lightning; 'now for the net. How he pulls! now *take time*, lad; *out* with him! A miserable wretch, not half a pound; caught by the tail too. Ah, that's the secret of

his pulling; the big trout won't take a fly to-day after that fellow's disturbing the water so. Ah, what is that? a small bleak? how came it into the net? the trout must have had it in his mouth. Get out the trout-snap, the one with the lead and Archimedean screw; slip the bleak on it.'

'Let you try? I dare say. Well, throw it across the top of the weir, in the foam; that will do. Draw it downwards slightly; my word, you've caught him! Give him line; top of the rod well up; give him line when he leaps. He's as large as a salmon. Give him LINE, boy (as the trout rushed down into the shallows); into the water, boy! the line's nearly run out; it's nowhere up to your knees. Watch him! draw the line up; gently! give him line; give him line — thought so! — I feared so,' as the line, becoming entangled from drawing it up, snapped, and the fish dashed on blindly into the shallows and stranded. Charley seized him instantly by the nape of his neck, dragged him through the water and landed him.

'Four pounds and three-quarters,' said Algernon; 'not a bad day's sport; good weight, just under five; yes, it's UNDER five.'

'Well, the weir is pretty quiet again; better give it an hour's rest. If you are not tired, we'll breakfast at the "Angler's Delight," some two miles off by the river, about half a mile by the road.'

So they breakfasted; and returning to the stream, which ran by the town, began to fish up.

'Look, what is that?' said Charley, 'swimming above the hole,' as a young water hen, with its little red head, about a few days old, swam across the stream some twenty yards above the weir. 'How pretty it looks! But what, uncle, is that dark shadow swimming beneath

it? — now it's close. Look, it has seized it by the leg! as a large rat drew it under water instantly.

Algernon, picking up a huge stone, ran to the rescue, but it was too late. A few bubbles came up to the surface, and that was all!

The mother-bird presently came out from the sedges and swam round the spot, to all appearance anxiously looking out for her young one; but seeing Algernon and Charley, retreated to her hiding-place, every now and then crossing the stream hither and thither, looking for the lost.

'Look,' said Algernon to Charley; 'see that mother flitting hither and thither, searching, with many a plaintive cry; now, my lad, whenever you are tempted to disobey your mother and vex her —'

What more he would have said remains a mystery, owing to a remark of Charley's —

'Here's that confounded bull again!'

'I thought he would have had enough of it,' said Algernon. 'I'm sure I have. Here's my fishing-coat torn to shreds; my green cap a mass of tatters; my legs a perfect wilderness of thorns and briars.'

'That is the bailiff with the bull, I fancy.'

'Ah, you've made a mistake; that's not our old friend. Here comes the bailiff; he may as well take the fish home for us; they may want it for luncheon. I wonder whether the Bishop will dine here or at the Rectory? your mother was always a great pet of his.'

'Hillo! you confounded vagabondising poachers! here I've got you at last! Dash my eyes and limbs! who gave you toleration to fish here? And so you thought you would have it all your own way, didn't'ee now? Oh, you precious villain, you! Here, Jim!' cried he, 'come here; here's a confounded thimble-rig fellow, with a monkey;

here he's been a poaching; but I've a got 'un *now*! He shall go into the water for that; as sure as my name's Sam Sayers he shall!

'Aye, maister,' replied his faithful henchman, 'an he's been an' swallowed thy bay mear; he has for sure,' and the man grinned like an inebriated Satyr.

'What d'ye tell of?' said Farmer Sayers, his choler still increasing. 'If he has! Well, I'm kalliwized, these mounseers can do anything!'

'An' so you seed 'un?'

'Aye, for sure. Don't you see the tail of un hanging out of 'un's mouth!!!' And he roared at what he considered his witty allusion to Algernon's Crimean beard.

'Is not this Colonel Conyers' fishing?' said Algernon.

'No, it ain't,' he waspishly answered; 'no, it ain't.'

'Whose, then?'

'Mine!'

'We have not been fishing here; merely breakfasting. Well, it's dry work talking, farmer; what shall it be? brandy and water or gin and water?' inquired he, jerking his thumb significantly over his shoulder in the direction of the little hostelry.

'Well, sir, as you are so pressing, I'll take a little brandy, sir, if you please.'

So they retired to the inn.

'Make so bold, sir, as ask your name? Dear heart, for sure! Did you know my boy who was killed at Bally-clavy?'

'I think he must have been in my troop; was his name the same as yours?'

'Aye! how d'ye know my name?' said the farmer, suspiciously.

'Why, man, you mentioned it, though its remaining

unchanged was conditional with my taking a header into the river.'

'Well, I axes your pardon, Captain; but, about my Sam.'

'He was a young man of whom I had a good opinion; he was already a corporal, and would have been made sergeant the first vacancy. His hair and moustache were red. You are dark; but he must have been your son from the general likeness.'

'Aye, aye, sir! his mother's hair *were red*, leastwise SANDY; some of the children's red, and some of them's black, and some of them's black and tan, like poopies (puppies). *Aye*, Sam didn't take after the old dog. His mother were a good 'un, though; come of a rare good stock. My poor boy! So you were near 'un when he fell? He was a wild lad; but a good 'un after all. Tell me all about it.'

'Well,' said Algernon, 'we knew that it was madness to order us: but as the order came, there was no choice. Moreover, there had been some unpleasant things said of the cavalry; that they only came to look on, and were no use. However, the order came, and at it we went, into the thick of them, racing pace. Your lad was next to me in the charge when we got well amongst them; then he left me. I saw him charge ten of the Russians, who scattered just as sheep do when a dog gets amongst them; he must have killed five or six!'

'Dash my wig, I'm glad to hear it! Go on, captain.'

'Well, then, the Russians fired on both parties, and down he went, shot right through the heart; and the next minute I was struck by a rifle bullet about two inches under the right shoulder; it pains me now, sometimes. My run after the bull has done me no good. You got his medal, I suppose? True, I forgot they were not issued.

I think that I could get *you one*, which was his *due*, as I have some interest.'

'Well, Captain, if it could be done, I should like to have his *horse*; I'll give the price, Captain.'

'Well, there is to be a sale of cast horses in the regiment next week, and I'll write to the adjutant for you.'

'Do you know our parson as was? He's gone now; poor old chap! He was a good one in his day. There wasn't such a judge of a beast anywhere. And as to his pigs; you should have seen 'em, Captain. They was lucky pigs, all of 'em. How fond the old women was of 'em! He used to give the old widows first choice, as they stood on his list, and he had a dozen there at a time. He was a kind man, he was! If I wanted a good pig I always gave a widow a shilling to go and buy it. I suppose it wasn't quite fair upon the old chap; but you know one must live. [Algernon did not see the force of this remark, but he said nothing.] He always gave *them* a bargain. Ah, well! he has gone to the great account, as he used to call it. They used to say that he did screw up his tithes most unmercifully. Poor Parson Corrie! he comes to me one day, when I was a young chap —

'“How many cows, Mr. Sayers,” says he, “how many cows do you milk of a day (it was just before the tithes was commuted, you know, Captain)? How many cows do you milk?” says he.

'“Twenty-five, sir,” says I.

'“Where?” says he.

'“In the farm-yard,” says I.

'“And how many in the upland?” says he.

'Well, I was dumbfounded at this, and it struck me all of a heap. I HAD a few up there for convenience sake.

‘ “ Well, sir,” says I, “ you seem to know all about it, better than I do. How many is it? ”

‘ “ Forty-five,” says he.

‘ Well, somehow, he had got it pat ! So I says *nothing*, and he puts down forty-five.

‘ “ How many young pigs,” says he, “ this year? ”

‘ So I tells him, what’s the use of asking when he knows. So he tells me right away. Well, I was taken aback at this, and I didn’t know what to say.

‘ “ Come, Mr. Sayers,” says he, “ it’s no use trying to deceive me.” And I really thought it wasn’t.’

‘ Wasn’t what? ’ said Algernon.

‘ Why, no use trying to *deceive* HIM. Ah, thinks I, you goes to the cunning man ; but I’ll spoil your sport ; I will ! So I went to the cunning man, and he was very mysterious like —

‘ “ Some *does*,” says he, “ and some *doesn’t*.”

‘ And that was all he would say ; so I crosses his palm with half-a-crown, for I thought to do things liberal —

‘ “ Some doesn’t? ” says I.

‘ “ Some *does*,” says he.

‘ So I knowed at once that the parson HAD been there. In course he would have given him gold, and the cunning man would tell him more ; of course he would, or he would have to go to the Red Sea. Well, Captain, I told Robinson’s father. He was alive then ; and he tries him — but it was no go. And when the tithes was commuted, oh dear, it *was* cruel work ; it was, for sure !’

‘ Did you ever ascertain,’ asked Algernon, ‘ how he gained his information? But come, you must have another glass ; it’s dry work talking.’

‘ Well, Captain, as you are so pressing, I don’t mind another bottom.’

To the maid : ‘ Another bottom of brandy, my dear.’

‘ Well, Captain, my house was close to the church, and so was the rectory, and were built on the highest bit of ground, far or near. You can see the tower out of the window where you sit, Captain.’ (He always gave him his full military title, as he supposed; and was very mortified when Algernon told him that he was a brevet-major. When told that his son had been in his troop, he would have made him a military salute, had he known how.)

‘ Well, then, MAJOR, it is the highest tower within twenty miles. It was well known by all; and the minister of the next village, at the meeting-house the other night, he was preaching about Samson —

‘ “ You know Ravenscar tower,” says he. “ It is the highest tower within twenty miles,” says he. “ And you know Farmer Sayers’ big black bull,” says he; “ well, Samson would have taken ’un up by ’un’s tail,” says he, “ and hoisted ’un up over Ravenscar tower.”

‘ So you see, Major, it must have been a high one. Well, I gets me up one morning early, and looks out of the window, just as the day was breaking, and I sees the old chap creeping along like a cat under the old yew hedge, in his grey flannel dressing gown; under his arm he had something like a small brass cannon. Come, you’re spry, thinks I, to carry that thing; it must weigh nigh upon four hundred weight! Well, gets he up into the tower. I could watch him from my bedroom, as it looked over the garden, and he pokes the cannon out of the little room above the belfry, and he pulls something like a tompion out of the muzzle of it. Well, thinks I, you are a funny old chap; only think of your being up to such games. Well, he looks along the barrel. Says I, he’s aiming at the new meeting-house. It’s a bad job for them, thinks I, if he is. I was once a boy on board the “ Benbow,” but

I only stayed a year; and I knowed a four-pounder boat-gun. Well, he didn't fire; but as quick as can be he points it at me. He's never going to do it, sure-ly, thinks I; I'm a ruined man; and slips on my breeches and coat, and washes my face at the pump. I goes quietly across to the tower, creeps up the stairs, and looks in. There he sits at a table writing, with a paper before him, and he had got the four-pounder slewed round and pointed dead upon Farmer Robinson's.

' "You're never going to do it, sir," says I, "and his missis a-dying!" With that he turns round, and looks me full in the face —

' "What do you want here?" says he.

' I didn't like being alone with him. They said he was as strong as a horse, and had once taken three robbers, one after another, by the scruff of the neck, and pitched them into the river.

' "You're never going to do it?" says I.

' "Do what?" says he.

' "Pitch a shot into the new meeting-house," says I.

' With that he looked puzzled for a minute, and then he laughed like anything.

' "No," said he, "that is not my plan of driving out strange doctrine from amongst my flock. What you mistake for a brass gun, is only one of Dollond's largest telescopes. I'll be plain with you, Mr. Sayers," says he, "you are such a thorough set of rascals."

' Here he looked as black as thunder, and I thought of the three robbers, and his pitching them over, and I was a bit scared, and answered him, humble like,

' "Well, sir, '*Live, and let live,*' is my motto."

' "Indeed," says he, and he draws himself up. "Many of you farmers are a curse to the land. There are SOME bright examples to the contrary. You pay your men

seven shillings a week, and you pay it in kind. You charge full market price for damaged corn."

'His eyes grew darker and brighter, till they seemed to send forth sparks of fire.

'“Your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall eat your FLESH as it were FIRE. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is by you kept back by fraud, crieth! and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

'“MAN! have I not judged you aright? There is not common honesty among you. You rob the poor and the fatherless, the widow, and the orphan. Not one of you has given me a true account of his dues. (He wasn't far wrong, Major.) And now, that by an iniquitous law the tithes of the Church are commuted for money payments, I am, for my part, determined that, so far as I am concerned, the Church shall not suffer.”

'“You'll *make money* by the commutation,” says I.

'“It MAY save a certain amount of *bitterness* and *jealousy*, but we have a *right* to the tenth part of the produce of this land. Every estate that has been sold has been sold subject to this TAX (as you perhaps would term it). No man has purchased above nine-tenths of his estate. No man has inherited above nine-tenths of his estate. The other tenth is God's. And when agriculture improves, and land increases TENFOLD in productiveness, as *science* advances, the Church won't receive one tenth, one twentieth, or one fiftieth of her just rights.”

'“Well, sir,” says I, “if we manage our farms better, we should have the advantage.”

““YOU,” said he, “and by whose experience do you profit? by whose skill are you enriched? The first, or one of the first agriculturists of the present day is a clergyman. He has spent hundreds, thousands, in improving agriculture. You adopt his improvements, and yet talk of all improvements being your own; look here” (said he, opening the window).

‘Well, I thought of the three robbers, and wished him “good morning.”’

‘So he whips hold of my arms; it was no use to struggle; “It’s all up with me,” says I; and he drags me to the window.

““Do you see my glebe?” says he. “Do you see that plough?” says he (it looked somewhat like a grasshopper on wheels). “Did you think a pair of horses could plough that field? the old plough would have required four. Do you see that twenty acre grass field?” (in wet weather it was a perfect swamp). “Do you see the old dry ditch?”

““Yes,” says I, “it would turn a mill wheel.”

““Now, it all comes out of the twenty acre field. Do you see the long meadow there, which used to be as bad? Do you see that?” (and I looked, and there was a thing like an iron daddy long legs walking about the field.)

““That is the new draining machine,” says he. “Now,” says he, “who gets the best labourers in the village?” says he.

““Your Reverence does,” says I, “no thanks to you.”

““Do I pay them one farthing more?” says he. “I pay them *regularly*, and in *money*. If I can help them in any other way, I do so, and it is my duty to do so, as it is yours. I seek to do my duty; be equally careful to perform YOURS. Good morning,” says he; and down I goes.

‘Thinks I, I should like to tell you my mind about this; but there’s a time for all things, and I should like to be safely out of this tower first. So I gets me home to breakfast.

‘Ah! well, he’s gone now, poor old gentleman. We shall never see his like again. Did you know, sir, that poor old Mrs. King died a short time ago, just before old Parson died? She was a good old lady, she was. He kept her uncommon close, the old man; yet she had always something for a poor or sick person. You know the house, Major; the long cottage, with the green lattice-work, and the roses trained over it; she was mortal fond of them roses, she was; it seemed to make her heart bleed to cut one, it did for sure. Well, when our Margaret Anne lay ill of the fever, the old lady used to come and see her, and bring her all sorts of strengthening things, and sometimes some of her roses; it must have gone against the grain to cut them.’

‘Ah!’ said Algernon, ‘I must look in upon the old Captain. I knew him well when I was a boy. I used to stay here with my poor old uncle, before he lost his sons. What has become of Molly Hill? Dead? I suppose they must be all gone now. I should think none are left here who remember me. Surely that is not old Nancy, as we used to call her; she was very fond of me, poor creature, when I was a mere lad. I used to watch for her behind the hedge, with a number of straws filled with gunpowder laid by the hedge. I ought to have been well flogged, and I should have been had the General known it. How frightened she used to be, as they phizzed round her; I believe she liked me the better for it. Many an ounce of snuff has she had from me. Dear me, it seems but as yesterday.’

‘That must be old Tom Taylor, an old scoundrel as

ever lived,' as an old man on crutches, of Herculean make, approached; but he had somehow lost a leg.

If ever there was VILLAIN written in a man's face, it was visible in his; altogether he was not unlike the picture of the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the Temple, in the Raphael cartoons, with a far more villanous expression. How he had escaped hanging was a marvel. As a lad, Algernon had always found him in 'baccy. So Algernon spoke to him, and saw that he was not recognised.

'Well, Tom, so the General is gone.'

'Yes, he's gone. Oh, a blessed man! I be a'most dead with this cough and the rheumatics — oh! oh! oh!'

'Here, Tom, you seem in a bad plight; here's half-a-crown for you: do you remember me?'

'Ah, I do for sure, you be one of the old Captain's nephews. The poor old lady's gone; well, we must all die — oh! oh! I be'ant long for this world.'

'Well, Tom, do you remember anything of a lad who used to be about here, they called him Algernon Conyers?'

'E'es, I do for sure; eh, he was a rum one, he was, *be sure he's come to no good.*'

'Well, Tom, he's not hanged yet, so that will be a comfort for you. And how's Joe, your son? He was a wild rackety fellow, but I never thought there was much harm in him. What's he doing?'

'Bad, sir, terrible bad; he married, sir, then she left him; now he's living tally with some one else. Yesterday he kicked his old mother out of the house, and he treats me like a dog, sir, he does; he's always a-drinking and a-swearing; his language, sir, is dreadful; but that isn't the worst, sir; and that's what it is, and it's breaking his mother's heart and mine,' and putting on what he meant for a spiritual expression of feature, but it

merely resolved itself into a diabolical leer, a look of *devilish* cunning! and sinking his voice, he whispered, 'he be'ant *religious*, Captain, he be'ant RELIGIOUS. I should not have minded for the rest, but he be'ant religious!'

'In other words, he has not added hypocrisy to his many vices: in which case you are the greater scoundrel of the two; be off with you,' and the old man slunk away. So, wishing Farmer Sayers good morning, they returned through the village instead of taking the road, near the Nun's pool.

'Dear me,' said Algernon, 'I am very much done up with that confounded bull. You'll have to carry me,' said he. 'I think I'll inquire for poor old Captain King. I have not seen him for many years; he began life under great disadvantages; he married and left the army, that is, on half pay; they made him up a purse on his retiring. His wife had a hundred a-year of her own; this he made her devote to household expenses; but did not allow her one penny of his own income: a thorough old screw as ever lived: his very love for his wife was mere selfishness, because she contributed to his comforts, and he had an idea that she saved him many expenses; moreover, her 100*l.* a-year was merely a life interest. So they went to Salamanca Villa, as it was called. It was a pretty cottage, certainly, standing in a park-like paddock of two acres. The cottage did not front the road, but the French windows, as they were called, opened into a flower garden.'

The old man did not hear them approach; and the windows being wide open on account of the heat of the day, Algernon and Charley peeped in. Before an old oak cabinet, which had evidently been brought down from an upstairs room, sat a tall thin man; he had on a single-breasted frock coat (buttoned up to the chin),

of superfine black, with a white stock round his neck, no shirt collar, dark grey trousers, strapped tightly over his Wellington boots. He was a fine-looking man, very like an old gentleman; his white hair clipped very close, and a gold-rimmed pair of spectacles on his nose. Round the room were hung old pictures of the Vesuvius-in-eruption class, something in the coloured print line, with a short description of each in Italian, such as are sometimes seen in old houses, *upstairs*; by his side lay a pair of white buckskin gloves, and a long gold-headed cane lay across a well-brushed hat; indeed, there was something about the whole appearance of the old man, that whoever might come short, Peregrine King, Esq., late a Captain of His Majesty's Light Horse, would take care that he got full rations. To Algernon he appeared (as proved to be the case) to have returned from turning over a heap of old rubbish, belonging to his deceased wife: before him lay a silver gilt *etui*, an old fruit knife with silver blade, on the pearl handle of which was engraved 'Mary Powell;' it had been given to her when a child, an old copper-gilt chatelain; he had tried it with a small file.

'Poor old thing,' said he, 'she was soon gone. I never expected to have been left alone: what AM I to do? where shall I get any one to look after me? why didn't she take more care of herself?' said he testily. 'I am a miserable old man,' whined he, 'a miserable old man! to think that I should have been left thus.'

Algernon coughed once or twice, but without effect.

'Dear me,' said he, taking up out of the cabinet an old pair of stockings, carefully stitched together, 'where's a knife? Ah! five spade guineas, as I am a living sinner. Oh! Mary, Mary, why did you leave me?' whimpered he. 'I am a MISERABLE old man. What's this? it's very heavy: a piece of black silk rolled up into a ball, a lot

of cotton wool inside : ah ! here are the canaries !' cried he, as he tumbled out seven more spade guineas. ' Well, well, to think of this. Eh, dear ! I would soon have made the 100*l.*, 90*l.* Box of counters ; eh ! pearl fish, layer of cotton wool, pearl fish again, layer of cotton wool again ; ah ! here are the yellow boys !! five, ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty, forty-seven !!! dear me, dear me ! I would have made the 100*l.*, 80*l.* a-year, had I known this. Oh, and to think that she should have left me ! Oh, I am a miserable old man, a miserable old man, and very poor,' said he, as with the help of a chisel and a strong pair of pincers, he managed to pull the old cabinet to pieces, finding small sums in every crevice : he then tried the old spinet with equal success, and after a long search, managed to collect some 300*l.* or 400*l.* ' Eh, dear me ! dear me ; she must have made a mint of money of her bees ; she ought to have paid me for it, she ought.'

' Ah, Algernon,' said he, looking up (far too old a soldier to be taken aback), I heard you were here, my boy. You have heard of my sad loss ; a melancholy thing to be left alone at my time of life ; a happy release, only three days ill, Algernon. By the way, my boy, you pass through Belton on your road home, only a mile from here ; pay this gold into the bank for me, my good fellow, I'll do as much for you another time,' said he, coolly putting the canvas bag into Algernon's pocket. Algernon felt *done !*

' I'll do it with pleasure,' said he ; ' but there was a riot last Monday there, on account of the price of butter ; several people robbed.'

' Ah ! I'll risk it,' said the old man, with a grin.

He didn't believe one word of it, evidently : something rustled in the bushes. ' Ah ! there's that brute of a dog again,' said the old man, seizing the poker ; but the brute

was off; so, after resting a few minutes, Algernon rose to leave.

‘Now remember, Captain King, I take this money to oblige you, entirely against my wishes. If I lose it I am not in a position to replace the money without great inconvenience. Now remember, I will not be answerable for mischances; you send it at your own risk.’

‘All right,’ said the Captain; ‘it’s safer with you than me. There was a confounded thimble-rig fellow came with a basket of crockery here this morning, but I packed him off in double quick time. Sold him a bit or two of poor Mary’s old china.’

So Algernon and Charley strolled on down the shady lane, near the outskirts of Belton.

‘Well,’ said Algernon, ‘I never met with such a lane as this before, except in Devonshire. Ah! here’s the Captain’s thimble-rig fellow, with his basket of crockery on the ground.’

‘Please, your honour, to buy some fine old china,’ said the man, pointing to some beautiful old vases enriched with medallions.

Algernon stooped carelessly to take up one of the vases. The man suddenly felled him to the earth with a blow from his heavy stick. His mate rushed out from his hiding place in the hedge, and seized Charley by the collar, whilst the other man snatched the bag out of Algernon’s shooting-jacket pocket.

‘Dead men tell no tales,’ cried the companion, as Charley, twisting about like an eel, freed himself from his grasp, and, recollecting himself, sprang behind the basket of crockery and deliberately blazed away at the two with the revolver, missing them both, as may be supposed. Somewhat flurried they did not wait for a second shot apiece; having secured the purse, off they went over the hedge.

Algernon opened his eyes, got up, shook himself, looked puzzled for a moment, and then thoroughly realised what had happened. 'That wretched old screw, I won't pay him back one doit! no! not one stiver!! Hillo! what are you at?' cried he, as Charley, resting the revolver on the hedge, took a flying shot at the fugitives.

'I've done him this time,' observed he, as the thimble-rig man dropped, but, rising again, continued his flight. 'Dot and carry one; now I will have a touch at the other. Dead men tell no tales, don't they; we'll see about that.'

'Hold hard: it's murder if you kill them now. I'm not sure but that the thimble-rig fellow is *hit hard*. How my head aches! Well, there's nothing like a velvet-teen cap well padded. I'm sure I've seen that fellow before.'

'Give me the revolver, uncle?'

'Certainly not; but I'll make you a present of a gun if you like.'

'Very well; I'm agreeable. How do you feel, uncle?'

'Oh, I'm all right again now — rather a headache, that's all. That scoundrel is no stranger, and must have been close to the window all the time, hidden in the bushes. I hope, boy, you haven't killed that fellow.'

CHAPTER VI.

LADY Emily and her fair guest returned to the Hall. 'Now take off your things at once, dear Pen, and lie down and rest yourself. I have to go to Boddington, some ten miles off, and a hilly road. Colonel Conyers is about to build a new church in that neighbourhood. I have promised to lay the corner-stone. The Bishop is to be present, and Mr. Gawaine Conyers, his chaplain, comes with him. You have had enough travelling to-day, so rest for the evening. Mary will take you through the conservatories.'

'I'm not tired the least in the world; no, not the least bit: do, dear Lady Emily, let me go with you?'

'Well, if you wish it, the carriage will be ready in half an hour. There will be a sort of luncheon there at half-past one; that will, I think, do for you.'

'I think that I should like a biscuit and a glass of wine and water. May I, Lady Emily?'

'O Pen, Pen! I knew it. Had I offered it, nay, had I gone on my bended knees to you to urge you to take something, nothing would have prevailed upon you. Of course, my dear. See! here is a tray.'

And presently they started. The grey ponies, to whom the journey to the station was little more than exercise, soon took them to Boddington, where they met a remarkable procession: first came the Boddington school children, 600 in number, with some fifty flags, embroidered with

every imaginary device: the keys of St. Peter, the crossed swords, the arms of the diocese, the Conyers eagle, and their arms—argent, a bend between three leopards, faces sable.

‘Eh! see Conyers’ black cats!’ cried a graceless urchin.

‘Eh! see the rhinoceros,’ cried another, much taken with the representation of some curious beast on a shield.

The children marched three abreast, every ten minutes getting completely clubbed; then they had to wait five minutes to re-form them. Next came five policemen trying to walk three abreast; next came the clergy, first the Rev. Dr. Johnson, of Boddington, and the Vicar of Kingston, supported by the perpetual curate of St. Michael’s in the same town, in hats and somewhat faded silk gowns; behind them came the curate of Boddington in a splendid silk Master’s, a brilliant scarlet hood, and a square cap; next came the curate of St. Michael’s, in a silk Master’s, with a brilliant blue hood, and square cap, a gentleman with a slightly Hibernian accent; next to him came the curate of Kingston, a middle-aged man, with a large family, habited in a stuff bachelor gown, and nondescript hood. Then came the Freemasons, led by the grand marshal, a gentleman with a remarkable headdress, a black frock coat with embroidered white gauntlets, his coat adorned with (to the uninitiated) every conceivable order; then came the grand master, a very corpulent little man, with an embroidered white satin apron. Then came the second order of the brethren, the Gardeners, fancifully done up with vegetables, something like seaweed, each man carrying round his neck the rules of the lodge, framed and glazed, which, with the aforesaid vegetables, gave them very much the look of shipwrecked mariners. Then came the third order, ‘The Sacred Plough Boys,’ carrying the mistletoe: their dress was really picturesque in the extreme;

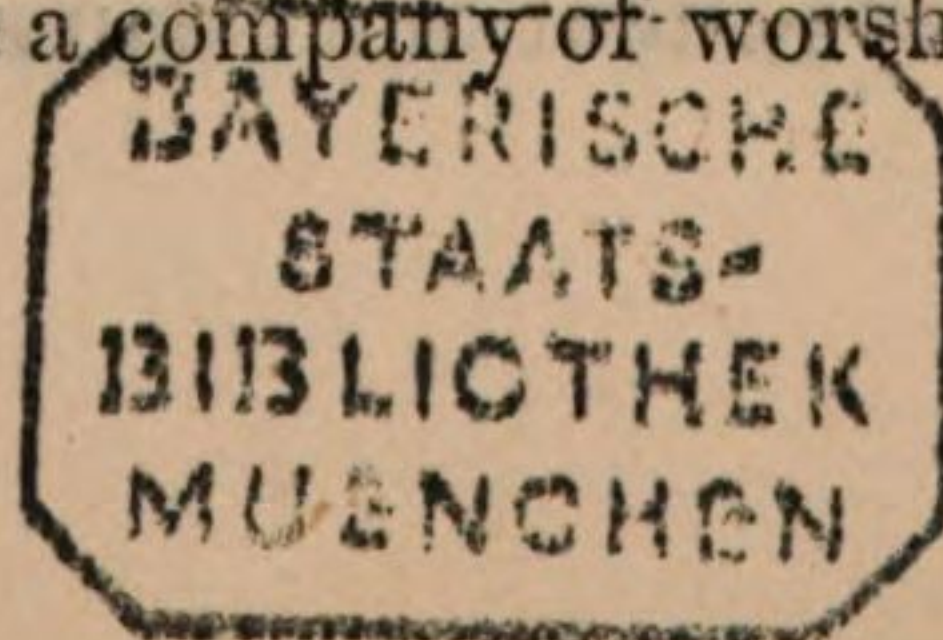
on their heads they wore green or red mitres, apparently of green or scarlet baize, rather larger than a grenadier's cap; their dress consisted of a long white robe, something like a night-gown, confined by a green band round the waist; in their hands they carried long poles with gilded stars, crescents, globes (celestial and terrestrial), and all sorts of extraordinary things. Then came the Boddington Hussars, Colonel Conyers' regiment, under the command of the Major, preceded by their brass band, who played a number of very Conservative airs; the troop was rather a small one, so that the modern Druids (got up in a style that DEFIES description), preceded by the Temperance band, playing most intemperate airs, had the advantage of both bands, the proximity of the Temperance band being cancelled by the increased numbers of the yeomanry band, so that Church and State, Liberty and the people, were (as was meet and right) so blended together in one extraordinary harmony, as to have defied the most zealous partisan to have resolved them into their separate component strains. The procession was brought up by several of the representatives of her Majesty's regulars, who happened to be recruiting, or on furlough, with their lady friends, wives and sweethearts, friends and companions, apparently much interested in the proceedings.

At last a turn in the road brought them in sight of the place, a barren spot on the hill side, where was a nondescript pile of masonry, covered with young ladies; on an elevated portion stood the Bishop, a tall benevolent-looking man, with a bald head, and rather unepiscopal whiskers; round him congregated the clergy,—the curates keeping in the far distance, much as a few scattered sheep in the presence of a strange dog. However, the Bishop ferreted them out, and in a most unorthodox manner (he was one of the new school, the only excuse that can

be pleaded in his behalf) proceeded to shake hands with each of them.

The chaplain said the prayer, the children sang a hymn, with an *ad libitum* accompaniment from the Temperance band; and the Bishop, mounting the highest portion of the building, made a short address to the people. He observed on the trowel the sign of the cross, and he trusted that that sign would prevail in the hearts of all people, when they undertook a work of this kind to the honour and glory of Almighty God. The stone which had been laid was for a church, where the doctrine of the Atonement once made on the Cross for sinners would be preached, he trusted, to the end of time; the stone now laid would last longer than any person now present; but that a time would come when heaven and earth would pass away, when the elements would be dissolved by fervent heat, but that they themselves were formed for eternity, an eternity of happiness, or of woe unalterable. He rejoiced that the days had now passed away when men dwelt in their houses roofed with cedar and painted with vermilion, yet thought any building, however humble, however mean, quite good enough for the worship of the Almighty. He was thankful to observe that a better spirit now prevailed. A house was about to be built (they had that day laid the chief corner-stone of it) which would be the ornament of the country round about, and was well worthy of being classed with the finest specimens of ancient architecture in that neighbourhood. We talked of the blindness of bygone ages, yet how much was there worthy of imitation; how much that we should do well to copy! *They* built to God's honour and glory; nothing was thought too good, too precious for his service; they built for the end of time; and they trusted that through their means there might ever be a company of worshippers,

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even unto the end of time, who should with angelic devotion be ever praising God, and saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.' But that in this case the Church must be true to herself; and that if the State unchristianised herself, by confiscating the property of the Church, and ceased to maintain churches throughout the land, enabling the gospel to be preached to the poor free of cost, then the Church must cheerfully take upon herself the duties which would then devolve upon her. And with an earnest exhortation to unity, he concluded his address.

Suddenly from that portion of the building where the corner-stone of the tower was being laid by the Freemasons, burst forth a strain of the wildest minstrelsy, accompanied by a couple of fifes and a drum. The effect was certainly startling! Indeed, the song reminded one more of the 'ungodly rebel' in the oratorio of 'Eli,' than anything else. Every now and then the sound of a fiddle was heard. They then retired to the tent, where a tremendous luncheon was served — plenty of things of a rough sort. Here a couple of boiled legs of mutton in one dish, separated by a tongue, then a piece of roast beef, further on a quarter of lamb, followed by tarts and puddings of the most solid description; drinkables not to be had for love or money. The *waiting* practically devolved on the *guests*, who had much difficulty in getting anything. A few waiters (of the 'Groundsel' description) waited upon some few of the guests; the rest being attempted by a set of slipshod girls, with red hair set off with tawdry ribbons, who carried on a continued foray on the dishes. Where the said dishes went to, nobody appeared to know; at all events, they never came back again. Beer was at last procured, and handed round by the above-mentioned damsels in dirty tumblers, carried in

their hands, the beer slopping over everything. The very sight of it nearly made poor Pen sick.

The magnates, after plastering the Bishop and one another to an immoderate extent, left the gay and festive scene, the procession returning with less degree of order than it started. So the Colonel returned with his old college friend the Bishop (the Colonel's career at Oxford had been brief but glorious!), and Gawaine, whom as the Bishop's chaplain he could not help inviting for a few days, and who, fully aware of the *contretemps* to which he owed his invitation, at once accepted it with an air of such profound humility as made the Colonel quiver all over. It was nuts to Gawaine: he could no more resist the temptation to rile the Colonel, than a lad could pass a bottle floating down the river with a heap of pebbles lying handy!

Lady Emily, having some shopping to do in the town, proceeded to do it at once, and followed an hour or two afterwards with Pen. When a mile from the Hall, she was met by the old keeper's wife, weeping and wringing her hands.

'Oh, my lady! that it should ever have happened in my day! Oh, to think of so cold-blooded a murder in broad daylight! To what is the country coming? Oh, to smash in the Major's skull in broad daylight! and oh, my lady! they say that Master Conyers has shot one of the robbers, and that he will be hung for sure!!!'

It may be supposed that such an event had never taken place in that quiet neighbourhood before. Belton was in a fever. Policemen rushed frantically in every direction, scouring the country far and near. Conyers Lea was at first incredulous. Attack a Conyers, and in broad daylight, too — impossible, incredible even in these sad levelling days; it must be a mistake. Every hack in

Belton was appropriated; every dog-cart, whitechapel, or gig, every fly or hack chaise, even the old barouche bought at the late bishop's sale, started off in pursuit, with two policemen inside and one on the box. Not a vehicle to be had for love or money.

Conyers the Second was lying on his back in the principal room of the 'Conyers' Arms,' with a short pipe in his mouth, wondering what was best for a splitting headache. Suddenly it occurred to him that an exaggerated account of the transaction would probably greet the party on their return, so he decided on driving home at once. Charley went in search of a vehicle, but nothing was to be had.

'Oh, Major Conyers,' said the landlady, 'why didn't you ask before? We have nothing — no, nothing whatever. They have taken everything but the hearse; not a hack even in the stable.'

'What is to be done?'

'Look out for yourself, uncle,' said Charley. 'I'll walk, or rather run. But I'll have the revolver; the gunsmith has loaded it again for me. I'll take it quietly this time. When I was in the Guards I shot many a man for less.'

'That will do for to-day, Charley,' said Algernon. 'Go and see what *can* be done. I am thoroughly used up. I thought two or three hours' rest would set me up; soda-water and pale brandy have for once proved a fallacy.'

Down they went to the stables.

'That will do,' said Algernon, as he saw a fine, powerful black horse, not unlike a Life Guardsman's charger; 'that will do; bring him out. Do you ever ride him, ostler?'

'Yes, sir; not very often.'

'Never mind, bring him out.'

'He'll go, sir, well enough; but you will have to put

the stick into him smartish. He has never been fit for much since he went in the hearse.'

Algernon looked at him again. His long rat tail nearly reached the ground, and there was an air of apathetic tranquillity about the brute that was particularly annoying.

Algernon hesitated; he felt thoroughly *done*—not a leg to stand upon; so he mounted, and the horse proceeded down the principal street of Belton at a professional walk. He used his stick vigorously, but to no purpose; the only notice that Shillibeer took of it was to arch his long tail in a manner that was delightfully amusing to the bystanders. Altogether, there was a sort of expression about the brute that said more plainly than words could express, 'The more you ask me the more I *won't* do it.' So Algernon dropped his heel, drew up the curb, sat well back, and tried to look as if he *preferred* a walk.

At this crisis, the great family coach of the Plimleys roared past, containing six tall, healthy-looking daughters, with overwhelming spirits and splendid white teeth. Algernon shuddered. The carriage stopped; not so the brute, who would go down a by-street where he had been professionally engaged that morning.

After a short fight he resumed his march, evidently under the impression that he was going to a funeral somewhere. Arriving at the outskirts of the town the gallant steed pricked up his ears at the sight of four mutes enjoying themselves on their return, in a melancholy way, at the door of a beer-house.

At that moment the great bell tolled. *Shillibeer* neighed joyfully, and, rearing up, set off at a long swinging trot (which somewhat tried Charley's wind), in the direction of Conyers Lea, passing numbers of people whom he knew well returning from the laying of the corner-

stone. He tried to pull up. There was the Colonel, with the Bishop and Gawaine ahead.

Not a bit of it!!! Shillibeer had been at Conyers Lea, at the funeral of the poor old General, and he was not to be done out of a visit: his former quarters had pleased him; he would stand no nonsense; and having an ugly nack of racking when hurried, soon passed the Conyers' barouche.

In vain the Colonel shouted to him; on he went!

However, the Colonel picked up Charley, who gave him a tolerably fair account of what had happened, less exaggerated than might have been expected.

The Colonel was in a fury. 'Such a thing had never been heard of!' And his anger was not much softened at seeing a herd of cattle in the plantations that surrounded the County Lunatic Asylum, which they were then passing. If there were a thing out of his own domains for the welfare of which he was especially solicitous, it was the County Lunatic Asylum. No one was near; he had left the grooms at Boddington. Gawaine would not take the reins to please anybody, and the Bishop did not offer any assistance. Charley he dared not trust. Boiling over with rage, and glowering round him, he observed Silly Joe, the village idiot, passing the carriage.

'Here, my lad,' he called out eagerly to him; 'here, my lad! drive out those beasts!'

The idiot looked at him with a malicious grin, saying, in a sort of sing-song manner, 'Never moind, *county pays!* *county pays!*' marched off in the opposite direction.

If a look could have annihilated him, that moment would have been his last. So nursing his wrath to keep it warm, he touched up his team, and in about half an hour or so reached home.

Lady Emily, with Pen and Mrs. Gawaine, had already

arrived, so the Colonel hurried his guests to their rooms to dress for dinner. He was not long at his own toilet, for his quick eye had marked down a packing case in the butler's pantry as he passed; and suspecting that it contained an Ary Scheffer which he had given a large sum in London for, he and Tibbits managed to unpack it before the party descended from their dressing-rooms. He had placed the picture (a palpable copy, and not a very first-rate one, either) at right angles to the windows, resting against the wall. It was but a cabinet picture, and he waited somewhat anxiously Gawaine's appearance. He dreaded Gawaine's supercilious manner, and shrank from his critiques; yet, for his life, he could not help consulting him.

Gawaine had a real regard for the Colonel, yet if each joke were certain to cost him a thousand pounds, out it must come.

'Here, Gawaine,' cried the Colonel, 'here's something in your way,' as his cousin descended the staircase with Pen, just after dinner had been announced; the Bishop paired with Lady Emily. Mrs. Gawaine gave Algernon a half amused, half apprehensive look. Gawaine took up the picture in both hands, walked to the window, looked at it carefully for about a couple of minutes, slightly arching his nostrils, placed it on the table with ostentatious care, and offering his arm to Pen, quietly observed,

'I am afraid the soup is COOLING, Colonel Conyers.'

The Colonel was hot. He boiled over instantly; yet what could he say? Lady Emily was *shaking* with suppressed laughter, the Bishop looked immensely amused, Mrs. Gawaine looked demure, Pen looked puzzled; Gawaine alone looked unconcerned, and walked on in a light and airy manner that added fuel to the flame.

The dinner was *à la Russe*. Lady Emily liked it in

summer. No doubt it is the pleasantest style. Each person literally sits under his own vine, has his dinner handed to him hot, is not annoyed by the reflection of his own visage in the hot dish cover (which being the reflection of his own face, bears an annoying resemblance to him — about as like as a second-rate photograph).

The dinner, however, went off like most family parties. The Bishop and the Colonel had been old Christ Church men, and had kept up their acquaintance ever since. The children came in as usual, and having a good notion of cause and effect, stuck close to the visitors. Mary went to her old friend the Bishop, who told her that he remembered her mother just such another as herself (why elderly gentlemen always fancy so, is to me a perfect marvel). She was certainly a nice child; but as to being exactly like her mother, she was far more like the Colonel. See her with Charley, who was a year younger, with her short print dress on, bowling in first-rate style, strong as a young lioness, sending the ball through Charley's wicket with that nasty left-handed style of round-hand bowling, which to me has always proved a perfect mystery. Charley always declared that she would thrash any of his set at Eton, and I daresay she would. In fact, with her brothers the gentle Mary was somewhat of a romp, and in her own particular set generally answered to the name of Jerry.

Algernon certainly thought that his favourite Pen had now grown up into a magnificent woman, very tall, wavy hair of a golden colour, violet eyes (which she knew well how to use), teeth like pearls, and that unmistakeable air of high breeding about her. Where she got it nobody could guess: her mother was the youngest daughter of Lady Emily's grandfather's steward, and her grandmother had been a very well-known beauty. The

old earl, having no daughters, had *adopted* her, and would have provided for her liberally had she chosen to marry according to his views; but she preferred the son of one of the leading tenants of the earl, and when a vacancy occurred he gave him his agency. He did pretty fairly, and his family all got on in the world. The youngest daughter, Pen's mother, married a manufacturer in a small way, who left Pen, at his decease, mistress of 100,000*l.* She resided in the neighbourhood of London with her mother, an invalid, and her father's half-sister, Miss Gumps, a lady of *somewhat* strong mind, and who kept the whole family in *somewhat* tight order. Pen had several offers, but none pleased her. Money she did not want; high rank was well in its way; with her beauty and wealth she might easily have managed to regild a somewhat tarnished coronet, but feared that it would prove dear in the end. But the coronet bore marks of wear, and that did not please her, and the coronet was said to be wicked!

Algernon she had not seen since she was a child, and wondered to find him so young-looking. Thirty-six, to be sure, was very old; but what with his flaxen hair, fair clear complexion, juvenile figure — light and active-looking, but in reality possessing that wonderful compound of extraordinary strength and remarkable agility so seldom seen, looking like those wonderful pieces of mechanism, formed entirely of muscle and sinew, one sees only at a circus, and which give one the idea of a cross between the tiger and the chimpanzee. Algernon was a very quiet specimen, disposed to take things easy unless aroused; but there was an unmistakeable air of high breeding and high tone about him though; very good-looking, more gentlemanly even than handsome; altogether a magnificent presence. She thought at once he

would do, and mentally refurnished the Grange, having already restored it.

Poor girl, how little she knew about real life! The idea of marrying for affection and regard! and solacing herself with the idea that she might meet with one whose constant society would be a blessing beyond price, and with whom it would be indeed preferable to toil on side by side through the trials and storms of life, rather than to roll over the velvet lawns of Plutocracy, or glide down life's sunny stream in almost royal magnificence!! Poor girl! but she knew little of real life. I fear that she is booked for disappointment; but then I know Miss Gumps, the gentle reader doesn't. What mattered high principle and irreproachable character to Miss Gumps? Had she not 60,000*l.* at her own disposal? and had she not made up her mind that her niece should be Rt. Honbl.? I *trust* she may be disappointed!

Poor Pen! Towards the Bishop she was very demure; with the Colonel she flirted shamefully, as young girls do with an elderly married man for whom they have a real regard; and the Colonel, with all his fidgety ways, was in most respects a very sterling character. But he suffered from comparison with Algernon, who was a perfect Bayard, 'sans peur et sans reproche,' a good specimen of a Christian soldier.

Mrs. Gawaine was a nice ladylike person, very young, the only daughter of a neighbouring baronet. There had been a little to do about that match also; but the young lady had carried matters with a somewhat high hand. Gawaine was about Algernon's age, and Algernon had a real affection and regard for him; and so had the Colonel, if he would have permitted it: but it must not be supposed that Gawaine had it always entirely his own way. The Colonel, when he recovered his temper, sometimes

paid him off with interest; but his surest card was an attack on the Church, and he did it right well — not that he himself for one moment believed his own arguments.

The Bishop was somewhere between fifty and sixty, and was the model of everything a Christian bishop should be. Kind and courteous to all, gentle with the young, severe only with the refractory, always foremost in every act of kindness and mercy, utterly free from affectation, of simple and inexpensive personal habits, yet living in accordance with the condition of life in which his heavenly Father had placed him, he died shortly afterwards, having saved nothing out of his episcopal income, but considerably diminished his large private fortune in furthering the cause of the Cross, leaving his children the most precious of heritages — the memory of a glorious father!

The ladies left the room, and the Colonel, with a quiet look at the Bishop, proceeded to torment Gawaine.

‘Dear me,’ said he, ‘I am glad to have finished all my preparations for building the new church. I suppose that it is quite right that the property should be vested in the Bishop for the time being, though I must say that the manner of appointment of our bishops is the most rotten part of the Constitution. I hear that your neighbours, Gawaine, are in great straits about enlarging their chapel. They have written me a long letter about the duties of property. I hear they expect to get a 50*l.* note out of me. I fancy I have a large farm somewhere about there.’

‘Indeed,’ said Gawaine. ‘Of course you have complied with their modest request?’

‘Well, not exactly,’ continued the Colonel. ‘I promised to give them an answer in a few days’ (he had really declined in somewhat strong language).

Gawaine looked puzzled ; he could not quite make it out.

‘ Not but that I am a sincere Churchman,’ said he ; ‘ and I can never thank Bluff King Hal too much for having extemporised so good a church, upon the whole, as the Church of England.’

He got a rise out of his enemy at once, who looked in astonishment at the Bishop, who was busily talking to Algernon, and who professed not to hear.

‘ *King Hal* give us a church, my dear Colonel ! What do you mean ? When did the Church of England cease to be the Church of England from the time of her first planting by St. Paul, who loved not to labour in another man’s vineyard : who, we are told, preached the Gospel in the extreme West ; and, by another historian who lived in the third century, that he preached even in the British Isles. Once a church, always a church without apostasy. Surely, as has been well expressed, the Church of England did not cease to become a church any more than a garden ceases to be a garden because some poisonous weeds are pulled up. Do you remember the English ambassador’s reply to the Cardinal who asked him where his Church was before Luther’s time ?

‘ “ You washed your face, did you not, this morning ? Where was your face before it was washed ? ” ’

‘ Very amusing, no doubt,’ observed the Colonel, ‘ and very witty ; but a joke is not an answer.’

‘ Not an answer, Colonel ? I consider it a complete one.’

‘ Indeed ! ’ said the Colonel. ‘ Are you in earnest ? Do you really mean it, Gawaine ? ’

Gawaine looked furious, though most unsuspecting of trap.

‘ Ah, Gawaine, you would be a thorough pope if you

only had matters your own way. Only think if Algernon had fallen at Balaclava, and I had been drowned with Emily, poor thing! and the children; what fun you would have had in your parish with some eighteen or twenty thousand a year; what book, bell, and candlestick work; what doing of penance in white sheets: how you might have bullied the National Club; what a staff of priests, deacons and exorcists!’

‘Speaking of that nuisance — the National Club — I’ll tell you what happened to me some time ago;’ and he went on to give the Colonel an amusing account of a circular being sent to churchwardens respecting his life and doctrines, and how Churchwarden Thompson brought it in to him, with a—

‘“Something for you to answer here, sir; it’s all about you, sir, and you’ll be pleased to answer it.”’

‘Accordingly being well up in the private history of one or two of those who signed the circular, I dictated a telling reply to Mr. Churchwarden Thompson, who sent it, and received no further queries from the aforesaid club.’

The Colonel tried to look grave, and declared that it was an unjustifiable proceeding on Gawaine’s part, who told him that, in a neighbouring parish, in reply to questions respecting the incumbent’s principles and general carriage, the churchwardens said that “*his principles was to pay ready money, and he only kept a gig*”!!

‘In truth,’ said the Bishop, ‘the Church is attacked by two parties: the first, who are rather jealous of her influence, and who conscientiously don’t and won’t understand her doctrines,—those who are Dissenters from *principle* or *prejudice*, call it which you like; and, secondly, those who look upon the Church as a sort of goodly land, flowing with milk and honey; aye, a land to be desired;

because it hath money and fat livings, and rich endowments, and they talk of the public, and bigotry.'

'Bigouterie, Mrs. H. would have understood it,' observed the Colonel.

'Well, perhaps so,' said Gawaine. 'Aye, liberality is the fashion now-a-days, giving away your neighbour's goods and keeping your own; "nunky pays, 'pikes and all!" as Garrick said to the highwayman, with an idiotic leer. We would gladly join the Dissenters if they would meet us at all; but we cannot give up everything to please them. It has never been the wish of the Church to silence all difference of opinion. Coincidence of opinion is, of course, most desirable; but we would not make it a matter of necessity. This has been the great error of Dissenters; they wish for perfect coincidence of opinion. Hence, a schism arises, and they are offended. Another sect forms. They decrease in numbers individually, but parties multiply. We have always endeavoured to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; not insisting on a coincidence of opinion, but a coincidence of principle. Within certain prescribed limits she has always permitted a certain latitude of opinion. *Beyond* these limits are the regions of heresy; *within* them, all discussion is free. Unless this latitude were permitted, one of two things would inevitably follow: either all discussion would cease, and the result would be a spiritual stagnation and apathy, than which few things can be more injurious to the cause of truth, or discussion would always lead to a breach of communion, and split us into factions and sects. By those who agree in principle certain data are assumed as *indisputable*; and so, as long as these data are honestly acknowledged, much difference of opinion is allowable. But in either advocating or refuting an opinion, under these circumstances, no one has a

right to speak of his opponent as a heretic, since heresy means a denial of the acknowledged data.'

'I think that I have heard that definition before,' said the Colonel. 'By the way, doesn't the monkish priest perform high mass at the rectory?'

'Ah,' said Gawaine, 'now I know what you are driving at. Mr. Mauleverer, from Glauston, some dozen miles, rode over on a dripping wet day to see a poor Roman Catholic, who had sent for him. I, of course, offered him a dinner, and Mary would have him stay all night. I found him a pleasant fellow, and a thorough gentleman. Poor fellow, he owned that the affections would make themselves heard, and that there was an aching void in the heart, sometimes, which the Church could not fill.'

'So you have your Popish as I have my Dissenting friends,' observed the Colonel, who had now quite recovered his good humour, having as he thought given Gawaine several tidy raps over the knuckles.

'Dissenters,' said Gawaine; 'both are dissenters.'

'Romish and Protestant Dissenters, lugging away at Mother Church,' said the Colonel, 'till they almost dismember her; may they never do so entirely: save us from our *friends*, Gawaine! Not that I quite understand it.'

Algernon is now I suppose retailing his adventures to the Bishop, who apparently takes a great interest in them. Well, there is something in drawing round the fire-place, even in such a huge room as this; his Lordship, however, and Algernon appear to prefer the oriel window.

'Now, Gawaine, what do you think of this claret?'

'Spoilt by icing,' observed Charley; 'it's thoroughly CHILLED; now frappé is quite a different matter.'

'You are not far wrong,' observed the Colonel, in his blandest manner; 'you are a fair judge of wine. You

have lately shot your man, and in my opinion you stand a fair chance of *swinging* for it! Now will you do me the favour of joining the ladies.'

'He is a very fine lad,' said Gawaine, 'if they don't spoil him: where is he now?'

'At Eton,' said the Colonel. 'He has had a double remove during the last half-year; I hope they won't spoil him. I am rather curious to know how you will prove your church much older than Luther's time; and if you prove it clearly, I will make my fifty guineas to my Dissenting friends pounds instead of guineas.'

'I am quite aware that you fancy,' observed Gawaine, 'that the English Reformers were men who, having devised a peculiar system of theology, were determined to supplant the established system, that they might put their own in its place. There could not have been a greater mistake — they were themselves *the Church* — the bishops, priests, and deacons, with the laity; and their wish was to reform abuses which had arisen from time to time *in the Church*: these deviations from the primitive faith were corrected one by one, they were brought to the touchstone of God's word, and compared with the customs of the earliest ages; many were discarded, being judged, in the words of our Articles, to have arisen from a corrupt following of the apostles; but from first to last they indignantly repudiated, in the strongest terms, the idea of any wish to overturn one church and found another. Read the preface to our Prayer-book; it speaks of the Church before the Reformation as identical with that after the Reformation, in a most remarkable manner: "And moreover, whereas St. Paul would have such language spoken in the Church as they might understand, and have profit by hearing the same; the service in *THIS Church of England* these many years hath been read in Latin, &c."

‘The first changes in the reign of Henry VIII. were aimed at the temporal power. What right an Italian prince had to his fees and his rent-charge on our fair land of England I am at a loss to discover; indeed, from the Conquest to the Reformation, the kingly and the papal powers were continually at loggerheads; if the king were a high-spirited monarch, he stopped the pope’s allowance; and when an interdict was issued, made a point of hanging the messenger. If the king was a craven, he cried “*pec-cavi*,” and paid forfeit, costs, and damages.

‘In the reign of Henry VIII., however, it was enacted, that neither the king, nor his successors, nor his subjects, should apply to the Bishop of Rome for any dispensation, faculty or delegacy; but by way of anticipating any charge that might be made by the papal party, it was expressed and declared “that nothing of this act shall be interpreted as if the king and his subjects intended to decline or vary from the congregation of Christ’s Church, in anything concerning the very articles of the *Catholic* faith in Christendom, or in any other things declared by Holy Scripture and the Word of God, necessary for their salvation.”’

‘All very well,’ said Colonel Conyers, ‘but I don’t quite see the gist of your argument.’

‘Oh, I merely wanted to show you that it was the same Church. As it was, so it is; not a new Church, but a purified Church, a reformed Church. In early days there was no such thing as liberty. Justice was meted out by the sword, and if she *had* the scales, she was not particular about the *weights*. The power of the Church was raised up to an unusual height as a check to the feudal power, and men overvalued the power which, with a word, could paralyse the arm of the robber noble. No doubt, it was

all overruled for good. The Church was a kind and indulgent master in those days. Talk of the darkness of the middle ages! I wish men would read some of the homilies and sermons lately translated, if I may so speak, from the Saxon. Would you have the finest and truest evangelical doctrine, in the best sense of the word, you will find it there — aye, plenty of it. Read Maitland's "Essays on the Dark Ages," Colonel, and it will well repay you.'

'I think I have it somewhere,' said the Colonel; 'it is a favourite of Emily's. Suppose we go into the other room. You are better up in these matters than I expected,' observed the Colonel, in a somewhat patronising tone. 'Of course, you will be here for some days; we will resume the subject if you like to-morrow.'

So they all went into the drawing-room.

Lady Emily and Mrs. Gawaine were sitting together in the oriel window of the library. She was much pleased with her new cousin — a pretty, gentle girl, very *petite*, features regular as a cameo; exquisitely dark, almond-shaped eyes, with that sort of almost flaxen hair giving you the idea of molten gold, with a thousand wavelets! She wore her hair plain, *crêpé*, an effect produced generally, as deponent verily believeth on his oath, by hot irons of unknown form, shape, and description. In saying that she was *petite*, I do not mean that she was a dwarf; far from me be it to insinuate such a monstrous statement. Something of the height of her most gracious Majesty, who may be said to be a pattern of womanhood; perhaps she was rather short than little; pretty hands and wrists, though rather more in proportion to her size than height; beautiful filbert-shaped nails, slightly pointed — moreover, they gave you the idea of being well adapted for attack or defence if necessary. As to her feet, I

know not whether they bore any resemblance to those of the bride Sir John Suckling describes :

‘ Her feet beneath her petticoat, like little mice, stole in and out,
As if they feared the light.’

To see the two together was somewhat amusing.

Gawaine, with his olive complexion ; short, black, woolly-looking hair (how he got it nobody knew); exquisitely chiselled features; small mouth, with rather thin lips, and a very decided expression of countenance, especially when put out.

Bertha, his wife, on the other hand, was blessed with a very sweet smile and very pretty teeth, and said to be a most loveable person.

‘ Well, Gawaine,’ said the Bishop, ‘ what is this about the Spittle Court, Colonel Conyers is telling me ?’

‘ Oh, about that scoundrel, Robinson. The Colonel would let him a farm ; I hope, rather than expect, he will not suffer from him. You should have seen my parish, my lord, when I first was licensed to the curacy. I never met such a set of ruffians. At first, they used to throw stones at me. One day I said to my old housekeeper, “ I now begin to have some hopes of the parish, for a man this afternoon touched his hat to me !” I really think that some of the quarrymen are the roughest lot I have ever come across. One day I was looking down a quarry, and I saw a poor wretched dog with a broken leg. I called out to a man who was working near, and found him somewhat deaf —

“ A poor dog has fallen down the quarry,” cried I.

“ Aye ?” exclaimed the man.

“ A poor dog has fallen down the quarry.”

“ Aye ?”

“ A poor dog has fallen down the quarry,” I repeated,
“ and has broken its leg !”

‘ “ *There let ’un bide ! ! !* ” was the savage reply.

‘ The behaviour of the sponsors gave me much trouble. At weddings I carried matters with a high hand. At first I was not so very strict ; when a sailor would insist upon standing with his arm round his bride’s neck, I managed not to see it. When, however, upon being asked whether he would have the woman to be his wedded wife, he replied, in a drunken manner, “ I will, if I can ; and if I can ’t, I can ’t, I can ’t ! ” I turned him out of the church neck and crop !

‘ I could do nothing with them at christenings. I shall never forget the trouble I used to have. The clerk had got into a bad habit of telling them the proper replies ; and on one occasion (it was the largest christening I ever remember ; there must have been nearly a dozen children) the sponsors were all quarry-men, and more stupid than usual. The church on that day happened to be crammed with people, and the christenings were after the second lessons. I rehearsed to them the belief. The clerk prompted them in a loud tone, “ All this I stedfastly believe.” There they stood as doggedly, all of them, as possible. The clerk prompted them again, with a little better success — (another interrogation with the same difficulty). Losing all patience, I closed the book, and in the face of the whole congregation, I DID give them a lecture, ending with, “ You bring these children here to be taken into Christ’s flock, and numbered amongst his little ones, and you all appear no more conscious of what you are doing than if you had been brought up in a heathen land. It is most disgraceful ! ” I could see in an instant that they had not understood one word of what I had been saying to them. The man next me, evidently thinking that I was reciting something from the book, and mindful of the clerk’s teaching, repeated, in a drawl-

ing tone, "*All this I stedfastly believe.*" His neighbour followed his example, and so on through the whole party. I felt strongly inclined to box their ears. My plan now is to have them all in the vestry before service, and give them a short explanation of the sacrament of baptism, handing to each person a card containing the replies. I have found it answer.*

'I should think so,' said the Bishop, 'and have generally recommended its adoption throughout the diocese.'

So, in due course of time, they parted for the night.

Algernon came down next morning, looking wretched, exciting much commiseration.

Presently a note was brought in, which Algernon read aloud to the whole party.

'DEAR ALGERNON,

'I am sorry to hear of your unlucky accident. Hang that thimble-rig fellow!

'I am glad to hear that Charley set his mark upon him. It is reported that you got an ugly cut; but I suppose not much the worse for it. Sharpe came here this morning, threatening to foreclose a small mortgage he has on my farm of £450, so I shall be glad if you will forward me a cheque for the above.

'Yours most faithfully,

'PEREGRINE KING.'

The Bishop elevated his eyebrows, the Colonel rapped out a somewhat hasty expression, Gawaine grinned with delight.

'Send him a blank post-bill,' said he, 'requiring the endorsement of the thimble-rig fellow. Old Peregrine with a farm mortgaged? Much more likely to have

* The above scene occurred in a church in the neighbourhood of Sedgemoor, Somerset.

small mortgages of ten and twenty pounds all over the country, paying him ten per cent. A thorough old screw.'

'Well, Algernon,' said the Colonel, 'the man is a raff, and will plague you. I'll send him a cheque; something tells me that the spade guineas will be forthcoming, and if not, why as I don't spend half my income, I shall never feel the loss.'

So he at once rose from the table, walked to a little cabinet between the windows, where he kept his cheque-book and other papers, wrote a cheque, which he enclosed with a few dignified lines, fully letting Captain King see that he understood him thoroughly.

'Never mind, Jerry!' whispered Charley to his sister, 'I have a rod in pickle for the old rascal. I have told one of the young grooms to come with us, and I'll astonish him *rather*.'

So when breakfast was over, they started off through the park and across the fields, stopping at the keeper's, and walking off with the keeper's double-barrelled gun, in spite of the remonstrances of the keeper's wife, whom Charley speedily reduced to submission by threatening to fire off the revolver.

It was about half-past ten in the morning when Captain King was strolling about, feeding his turkeys, dorkings, and game fowls, on which he set especial delight, and made much money by.

'Dear me! to think of Algernon being robbed; a dead loss to me of £450; of course he will pay me some time; he would not be such a scoundrel as to shirk it. What a blessing that they did not break into my house; they would have done it as sure as fate had I not made Algernon take the money. So he would only take it as my servant! Well, but my servants always pay for what they break or lose. Aha! the Colonel's stud-groom. A

cheque from the Colonel—funny fellow, there always was a touch of humour in him; let those laugh that win. Here, Joseph,' cried he to his sole male domestic (a tall man, dressed in a fustian frock and trousers, a stained red waistcoat, a very old hat with a new cockade in it, a faded green neckcloth, with thick shoes and worsted stockings) are you ready yet for Belton? Here, take this cheque, and tell them to transfer it to my account. Always do a thing at once, Conyers says, and faith he is right. Such a thing as stopping payment of a cheque!' so he wrote a light and airy sort of note to Colonel Conyers, thanking him for his cheque.

'Well, Charley, my boy, how are you to-day? Well, Miss Conyers, come to beat up the quarters of an old soldier. Want to see my cocks and hens, do you? Very well, Miss, so you shall. What do you think of them?'

'I say, Captain King, I will give you five shillings for a shot at them at forty yards, if I may have all I kill.'

Well, you may for fifty pounds, not one penny under.'

'Come! ten shillings if I miss,' and placing five shillings on the gate post, he walked off.

'O Captain King,' said Mary in her most persuasive manner, 'Charley is so conceited since he fired at the robber yesterday, and he has got the groom to load the gun, and the groom says it will be such fun for you to take the shot out, and then let him fire both barrels, and it will serve him right to take his five shillings, and give them to the poor of the parish.'

Captain King leered spasmodically at the suggestion. He took the gun, drew out the wad from each barrel, and shaking the shot well in the barrels, poured it out into his hand, then wrapped the shot up in an old envelope, and put it into his pocket.

‘ Here, Charley,’ said the old man, pocketing the five shillings pleasantly, ‘ fire away, my lad.’

‘ Very well,’ said Charley, walking through the high iron gates into the farm-yard with Mary and the groom, playfully turning the key in the lock, and putting the key into his pocket.

‘ Now,’ said Charley, ‘ throw them some corn, Jerry, so as to get their heads well together! That will do; now, John, stand ready to gather up the killed and wounded. I have all I kill or wound, Captain King?’

‘ All right, my boy!’ and the old man grinned through the high iron gates like an ogre.

Bang! bang! went the gun with a deafening report, tearing up the ground all round; hens and turkeys, ducks and geese, dorkings and game, one common ruin had fallen upon them all, for the little rascal had put *two* loads of shot into each barrel, with a wad between each load, and had put a short ramrod into the place of the proper ramrod.

Captain King cursed and swore like a madman, but the gate was locked, and he could not get out. Charley and John, tying up their booty by the legs, threw them into the keeper’s cart, and went off for a little drive to mature their plans.

Captain King effected his escape, saddled his horse and galloped off to Conyers Lea, and made his complaints to Colonel Conyers, who knew not what to say, for he felt dreadfully annoyed.

The Bishop drew himself up. ‘ Sir, this morning you proved yourself too sharp for my friend, Major Conyers; Mr. Charles Conyers has proved himself too sharp for you. Sir, if you WILL gamble with children, you must take the consequences.’ This accursed thirst for gold will be your ruin both here and hereafter. Good morning, sir.’

The old man, thoroughly disconcerted, left the house.

‘Well,’ said Colonel Conyers, ‘I would have given fifty pounds for it not to have happened.’

So Lady Emily and Pen went out to meet the fugitives, and to warn them. They had left the cart, and, doubtful of their reception, were returning through the stables. Cranworth, Lady Emily’s maid, had managed to find them, and give them due warning. Lady Emily had missed them.

Entering the quadrangle, they met Colonel Conyers and the Bishop face to face. Charley had three turkeys, two geese, and a duck over his shoulders; girdled as to his waist with a belt of game fowls, golden Hamburgs, Polish hens, and a peafowl; his hands and clothes covered with blood and feathers, his hat he had lost. Jerry, with her golden hair hanging down to her knees, a little behind.

Such a razzia, since Marshal Bugeaud left Algeria, had never before been seen; they had cleared off everything.

So the child stood watching her father, her violet eyes sparkling with mischief, looking very demure, feeling thoroughly caught, half timid, half defiant—as lovely a child as sun ever shone upon. And thus they looked at each other for a second or two in silence.

‘My lord,’ said the child, with a look of inimitable slyness, ‘how are turkeys selling!! We have lately set up in the poultry line, and have a lot to dispose of cheap.’

What could man do? A bishop is but a man; he ROARED!! so did the Colonel, and the children bolted.

‘This a SERIOUS affair,’ said the Colonel.

‘One would hardly suppose it to be so, to judge from present appearances,’ said the Bishop. ‘I remember her mother; just such another,’ said the Bishop.

‘She must have changed wonderfully since I had the

honour of making her acquaintance,' said the Colonel, and they strolled off together towards the library.

'I hate practical jokes,' said the Colonel. 'I never saw any fun in them. In the present case every excuse is to be made. I must keep Charley in hand; they learn every sort of devilry at Eton. There will be a glorious laugh at old Peregrine. Surely he cannot have the face to send in a bill for the cocks and hens?'

'I'll see,' said the Bishop, 'that he gives the five shillings to the poor of the parish!'

'Well,' said the Colonel, 'you mustn't be too hard upon him.'

'But I will,' said the Bishop. 'Do you think that I will see my poor defrauded!!'

'Well, I am really obliged to you,' said the Colonel; 'for setting him down so well as you did. I really felt so mortified that I was thoroughly at balk; quite taken aback — had not a word to say.'

After dinner, when the ladies had retired, Gawaine commenced his attack on the Colonel, who, having been too engaged to consult, or rather get up, his little manual, would not show fight; but manfully defended himself by Peregrine King's iniquities against any attacks of Gawaine's. Charley was in full force; his glass or two of claret had unusual effect upon him, after the excitement of the day, and he amused the Bishop at first by his cool remarks.

'Have you no children, my lord?' said he.

'I have six!' said the Bishop, sadly.

'Where are they?' inquired Charley, eagerly.

'Three, I TRUST, with God.'

The lad was for the time sobered.

'I feared so,' he replied, 'from your love for Jerry. Had not you one of about her age?'

The Colonel turned round uneasily in his seat. Charley had much exceeded his quantum, and was getting wild.

‘Weren’t you expelled, or something, from Christ Church, my lord?’ said he.

‘No, my dear,’ said the Bishop, quietly. ‘I should have been very unfit for the office of a clergyman, much less of a bishop.’

‘Well, but somebody was,’ said he. ‘Was it the governor?’ ‘Pon my word I forget!’

‘I do not know that it much concerns you,’ said the Bishop, ‘if he had been; but I think that there was some dispute with the dons, and he DID take his name off the books.’

‘Charley, my boy,’ said his father, ‘I shall have YOU laid up. Now, go to bed at once. Tibbits, more port, and tell me when Master Conyers IS in bed. Gawaine, did you ever hear of my being walked from Christ Church? In my day there was a very riotous set in Peckwater, chiefly noblemen; playing high every night nearly. I used to be there occasionally; not that my kind friend opposite quite approved of it. But I never played. Fitzmaurice, Desmond O’Neil (the Marquis of Killarney’s son), and Clinton Fitzgerald, wanted a fourth for a quiet whist party. A letter had been sent from some one to the censor, Dr. Oran, giving him a hint of the hazard and loo parties! The oak, of course, was not sported: so in he came. We couldn’t persuade him that we were only playing whist. I took it coolly; the others flared up at once. He gave Fitzmaurice the lie direct, who returned it by calling him some opprobrious name. Altogether, there was a ROW. The next day the three were expelled, and I received a gentle hint to try another college; so I entered at the Tavern. Christ Church was a complete wasp’s nest. We got some scarlet and green paint, and

on Tom Tower we painted a gigantic picture of the Martyr's Memorial, with portraits of Fitzmaurice, O'Neil, and Fitzgerald, vice Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer. The portraits were grand! Oran figured larger than life as a Dominican casting faggots on the flames. It was not an EXACT picture of the memorial, for there was a certain pictorial licence allowed. Well, it was very pretty certainly, when it was done; but of course it couldn't be seen in the dark, so we subscribed sofas, chairs, tables, and a few tar-barrels, which we thought we might want: there was a blaze that lighted the whole of Oxford. There was no fun in seeing a thing by one's self; and also to make the thing more lively and impressive, we decided on a musical representation. To make the representation still more dramatic, each man brought his kettle down, with a post horn, and the overture commenced. You would have thought it a very pandemonium. Oran evidently did. Out he came in a fury! Everybody but myself and Fitzgerald, with his fellow-sufferers, bolted. Fitz and O'Neil, each seized an arm, and asked me to do showman, which I did. They held him in front of the memorial, and I explained the painting after the approved fashion of the day. "There, ladies and gentlemen, you see that bloody-minded Dominican, Brian Boru, a torturing of them hinnocent victims," and so on. Oran fought like a savage; the Quadrangle was filled with men fearfully excited! "A no Popery dance!" they shouted out; and joining hands, yelling horribly, they danced round the flames till they burnt out, Oran, sorely against his will, opening the ball. By-the-bye, had you at Cambridge the custom of "*knocking out*?"

'Do you mean giving the name of the person whose guest you had been for the evening? Knocking out in *such a one's name*, I think, was the expression.'

‘ Exactly ! Well, Oran fumed ! He came up to me—

‘ “ Mr. Conyers, you think that this outrage will escape its due punishment ; but you will find yourself mistaken. You think that I cannot touch YOU. Perhaps not directly. I can through your friend. I will make an example of the gentleman in whose name you knock out ! ”

‘ If a shell had pitched into the midst of them (and they are nasty things, I can tell you) the whole college could not have been more startled. What was to be done ? The porter would not allow me to pass without giving up the name of my entertainer. Many a man passed a restless night. The next morning Dr. Oran went in state to the porter’s lodge, followed by the whole college in a state of alarm.

‘ “ Porter,” cried he, in a solemn tone, “ in whose name did Mr. Conyers knock out last night ? ”

‘ “ Dr. Oran’s, sir !!! ”

‘ You may imagine the scene that followed.’

‘ Well,’ said the Bishop, ‘ it has turned out all for the best. You have made a most dashing light dragoon ; but with your 18,000*l.* a year, as a parson you would have become a perfect thorn in the side of most bishops.’

But to return to our friend Peregrine King, Esq. He returned home in a great state of mind from Conyers Lea.

‘ If I catch that young rascal here again, I’ll SKIN HIM ! ’ and he strolled round the grass plot in anything but an enviable state of mind, poking into the ground with the end of his cane sundry scraps of an old letter which Jerry had torn up and scattered about. The old soldier was a perfect martyr to tidiness, and his acquaintances were rather fond of strewing about small pieces of paper, behind his back, for the sake of seeing him poke them into the ground with the end of his cane.

‘Well, what is the country coming to, with these Tractarian bishops and Puseyite parsons! I hate the very sight of them, eating Mother Church out of house and home. How pale old Conyers looked—he would have paid any sum I asked. And that confounded long-legged old fellow in an apron must needs put his oar in. Dear me! men will not mind their own business. Where should I have been had I poked my nose into everybody else’s affairs? Should have got it pulled, no doubt. I pity the poor fellow, though, who tried it,’ said the captain, with a satanic grin; and to do him justice, he was a gallant old fellow, though a thorough screw. ‘Ah, here comes Joseph.’

‘Well, sir, I have taken your note to the bank. They have caught those villains who hurt the gentleman the other day. They found one—the thimble-rig fellow, as your honour calls him—lying under the hedge, faint from losing so much blood; he had got all the money with him,’ and so Joseph gave an account of his proceedings to his master, and further informed him that a neighbour had told him how that his father lay dying, so he asked leave to go at once, which Captain King flatly refused to give; but finding Joseph determined, made him give a month’s warning, and got him to assent to a deduction from his wages in consequence, grinning to himself, for he had seen a lad who would do as well for less wages.

So Joseph, in a bad humour, retired to pack up his traps, and putting them into a light cart, hurried off to catch the express.

‘Well,’ said he, ‘I have at least twelve good hours before me, and ought to be there in six!!’

‘Well,’ said Captain King, ‘I’ll have a ride to Belton. What am I to do without that scoundrel Joseph, an un-

grateful blackguard? I knew he would play me some dirty trick. So they have caught that thimble-rig fellow, and all the money. Well, I was right in cashing Conyers' cheque. He might have sent for it again on the plea of the money's being found, and any guineas lost would have been lost by me. *Guineas!* ah, well, Conyers knows, I fancy, that a guinea is only worth a sovereign — ah, well!

So he mounted his horse, and rode quietly towards Belton in the cool of the evening. The horse was a fine animal — a splendid cob, about fourteen hands high; but what did a thin, wiry old fellow want with such a horse? The fact was, old Lord Millington, who weighed eighteen stone, had long been on the look out for such a beast. Captain King knowing this, had picked him up at a sale for twenty pounds, rising five, then a clumsy-looking brute as ever man set eyes on; but he had been a first-rate horseman, and knew what he could make out of him. So on he rode, keeping him well in hand, with a very sharp curb, continually touching him up with the spur, trying to get a six miles an hour out of his walk.

‘Well,’ said he to himself, ‘he looks worth any heavy man's hundred guineas, when I am on his back. Who would have supposed him likely to turn out anything but a heavy lumbering brute fit for a four-wheel. So ho, my lad,’ he exclaimed, as the horse cropped his ears at the sight of the lame tinker's donkey; but he knew who was on his back, and went quietly enough past.

‘Ah, the Conyers Rabbit,’ observed the old man, with a diabolical grin; ‘well, he possesses the *Conyers characteristics!*’ So on he went, very well pleased with himself, and chuckling over his witticism.

He entered the principal street of Belton, and as he rode on he saw a crowd round a shop window. A lad

had thrown a stone, and had smashed one of the *splendid* new plate-glass windows of Cheetham and Dunmore, the silversmiths. Mr. Cheetham was a thin, pale man, with a small voice, small pale washed-out-looking eyes, and a humble manner altogether; Dunmore was a fine, tall, powerful-looking man, weighing some sixteen stone, with enormous whiskers, and a voice like a lion; indeed, the partners always went by the name of the lion and the lamb, but in spite of his appearance, the lion was a very worthy animal, and one with whom the Colonel dealt largely. His Christmas bills were not to be despised by any tradesman, and the Colonel always paid within three months. Captain King always paid cash, and insisted on discount even for a mousetrap! Nor was he in principle altogether wrong, only he shaved too closely.

‘Dear me, what is the matter?’ inquired the gallant Captain, as he saw the youth whom he had mentally engaged as his future groom in the custody of a policeman, and Mr. Dunmore apostrophising the prisoner in a style more brilliant than polite. ‘Dear me, Mr. Dunmore, you don’t mean to be too hard on the lad.’

‘Well, sir, he owes me a grudge, Captain King, and he has done it on purpose; and unless he pays me two pounds for the window, off he goes to prison.’

‘Dear me, this is a hard measure,’ said Captain King; ‘well, I must intercede for the lad,’ said he, taking out his purse. ‘I am sure, Mr. Dunmore, you don’t wish to be too hard upon the lad,’ said he, taking two sovereigns out of his purse, and weighing them in his hand.

‘Certainly not, sir,’ said the accuser, with a surprised smile on his face; ‘I don’t wish to press the charge, and send him to prison; though he is a bad lad, a down-right bad one!’

So the policeman relaxed his hold of the lad's collar, who vanished instantly.

'Ah, Mr. Dunmore,' said Captain King, 'you have done a generous deed to-day, and will doubtless have your reward,' and at these words he slipped the two sovereigns *back into his purse again*, and rode off amidst the cheers of the mob. He had scarcely ridden the length of the street when he met the inspector of police.

'Good evening, sir. You have heard, I suppose, that we have caught those rascals. We suspect that there is another somewhere not very far off.'

'Indeed!' said Captain King; 'pray who is the offender?'

'Well, I never mention names,' said the inspector, 'as it sometimes tends to defeat the ends of justice. By-the-by, I understand that your groom is looking out for a place. Is that the fact? for I think that I know of a place that will suit him; in short, I think of TAKING him myself.'

Rather irritated, Captain King answered somewhat shortly that he was not in his groom's confidence, and returned home.

The next day, about luncheon time, he was surprised to meet the inspector riding up to his gate, or gates, as he usually expressed it.

'I thought, Captain King, last night of taking your servant. This morning I have decided on doing so. What sort of a character does he bear, sir?'

'Confounded scoundrel!' said Captain King; 'left me to see his grandmother, or something of the sort, at a moment's warning; and now I may clean my horse myself, I fancy! I'll give him no character.'

'Pray what sort of a character did you receive with him, sir?'

Captain King had taken him without a character, knowing him to be a handy fellow, and had, till his *Hejira*, thought him perfection.

‘Sir, I was perfectly satisfied as to his character,’ said the Captain (somewhat uneasily), ‘before I engaged him: pray, do you know anything to his discredit?’

‘Well, sir, I was surprised to find, from information I had received, that black Davis, who robbed Major Conyers, knew all about him. One of our young constables told Davis that your man had turned stag. Well, Davis cursed him, and said that he ought to be in the colonies, leastwise Norfolk Island, and that he was absent without leave, that his real name was Jack Simmons, and so I came over with my mate to clap the darbies upon him. Last night I thought it was not all right; but your honour seemed so hasty; but when I heard from Davis this morning, I came over at once.’

‘Have you had luncheon?’ said Captain King.

‘Well, no, sir, I have not. I came away in a hurry.’

‘Very well; I won’t detain you an instant. My man left last night, and if you will give me a lift, I will go back with you.’

Off they went, Captain King giving all the information in his power as to his man’s movements. And so they dropped him at the Bank. Here his worst suspicions were realised. Joseph had presented a cheque (so the elderly grey-headed cashier told him), and requested that it might be given him in gold. ‘I was surprised,’ said he, ‘at this, when he told me in a low tone that there was a young lady walking about the garden with the Captain very like him in face, and that the young lady was, or ought to have been, Miss King; a story, Captain King’ (observed the cashier, somewhat sternly), ‘I had reason to believe not improbable, from

what I had previously known. At all events, we cashed the cheque, and paid it to your man-servant in gold.' So, without further comment, he left the Bank.

How came the keen man of the world to be so taken in? Like too many others, looking at what was at a distance, he neglected what was under his very nose. Too wide awake to trust the punctilious though generous Colonel Conyers, he quite overlooked the fact that he was placing temptation in his servant's way, a man, too, of whom he knew nothing, save that he was a first-rate groom. We may be sure that the Bishop rejoiced when he heard of the punishment which his avarice had received. So, very much down in the mouth, he wended his way homewards.

As he was walking his horse quietly home, lost in thought, his reminiscences not being of the most pleasurable description, he heard a voice exclaiming, in a tone of timid indignation,

'So, lad, gently! gently! good lad, good lad, so ho there.' On looking up, he saw a very stout elderly gentleman, mounted on a splendid white thorough-bred, over which he had not the least control; he then saw that it was his acquaintance (he had no *friend*), Lord Millington.

'So ho there! so ho! gently there, gently—(in an under tone), if I get home safely, I'll put a pistol to your head, you infernal brute you, I will! Thomas!' cried he to his groom, who was mounted on a magnificent chestnut, which no one else dared ride, 'sheer off with that rampant beast of yours; don't you see he makes this brute of mine *wild*? If I ever reach home safely, I know what I'll do.'

'Ha! King,' cried he, as our friend, with a hawk's eye for a bargain, trotted up, his horse well in hand, showing himself off splendidly, and paying no more attention to

the gyrations of his thorough-bred neighbour, than if he had been an old cow, yet looking all the time full of life; for the gallant Captain had a playful way of touching him with the calves of his legs as an occasional preliminary to digging his spurs into him.

‘Ha, King; still got that splendid fellow? What’s his price?’

‘Well, I hardly know if he’s for sale; the Duke’s man has been over to look at him, and I am waiting to hear his reply. I asked him 200*l.* for him, dirt cheap for a heavy weight. That’s a fine horse of yours, nearly thorough-bred, I see; but nothing like up to your weight. You must ride eighteen stone.’

‘Well, perhaps he is not up to my weight. I think of selling him; he does not suit me. I gave 280*l.* for him in London the other day, quite thorough-bred, out of Ursula, who won the Oaks six years ago, by Merry Monarch, who won the Derby in ’45, six years old, handsomest horse in London. Give me 100*l.* to boot, and I’ll exchange; he doesn’t suit me at all.’

‘150*l.* would have bought him,’ said Captain King; ‘I could have done it for less. I can’t think what could have made you buy him at all.’

‘No, give *me* 50*l.*; and if the Duke won’t give my price, I’ll then have a deal.’

‘How does he ride? You warrant him in every respect. Very well. Where’s your groom?’

‘Oh, I have sent him on an errand,’ said Lord Millington; ‘one doesn’t always want a fellow dragging at one’s heels.’

‘Very well,’ said the gallant Captain, ‘taking hold of Lord Millington’s bridle. You try my beast, and I’ll ride yours.’

‘With all my heart,’ said Lord Millington; adding

inwardly, 'if ever I mount him again, you may call me anything you like.'

So he mounted the cob, who carried him well, walked well, trotted delightfully, cantered smoothly as a rocking horse.

"*Suave mari magno, turbantibus æquora ventis,*" as we used to say at Harrow. Why the old sinner rides like a centaur,' as the thorough-bred, having tried plunging and rearing in vain, was doing a little buck-jumping, all to no purpose; the old man *was* a most accomplished cavalier. 'As to his *expecting* 200*l.* from the Duke, it's a *lie* (I won't tell *him* so); he may have asked it, but he would take 100*l.* The horse is worth 150*l.* to me, aye, 1000*l.* What is money to a man like me, who can't spend his income? As for Lucifer, he may keep him and welcome for me. I know I've burnt my fingers with him. The burnt child dreads the fire, and he is quite right. I'll be *shot* if I cross his back again. I do believe he has come from the regions of darkness to torment me. Old Peregrine may take him and welcome. I wonder what he expects to boot; an odd 50*l.* shan't part us, though he is a regular hawk at a 5*l.* note. I wonder how they came to pitch upon the name Peregrine; it suits him to a hair.'

Thus soliloquised Lord Millington, not caring one sixpence for a 50*l.* note, if he thought right to give it, yet like all sensible men, hating to be imposed upon, knowing his man well, and being *thoroughly* aware that he would have to pay through the nose, as the saying is, for the cob: so having decided that nothing should prevent his purchasing the cob, and having considered that no power on earth should ever *induce* him to cross Lucifer's back again, he made up his mind that a trifle, an odd 50*l.*, should NOT part them.

Presently Captain King appeared again in the distance, Lucifer covered with foam, and looking as wicked as ever. Lord Millington had quite ruined him, and he thought that he might do what he liked. In Captain King he had caught a Tartar.

‘Humph!’ said Lord Millington. ‘Here he comes, wilder than ever! Old Peregrine is a thorough old rascal, but he is a safe man to buy a horse of, if you give him his price; and that you *must* do, for he won’t ’bate a penny. Besides, this cob is a splendid fellow, quiet as an old cow; such a walker! he must be able to manage something like six miles an hour; puts his foot down well, too; bends his knee.’

‘Humph!’ soliloquised Captain King. ‘This is a brute and no mistake! What can Millington have been doing to him? He’s as wild as bedlam now. He’ll never mount him again. What induces him to ride on a racing-saddle? My new-padded saddle will please him much better. The cob is the horse to suit him, and I’ll soon take the devil out of Lucifer. I know of a purchaser for him. I think that about 50*l.* will be about the thing.’

‘Well, my lord, what do you think of him?’

‘Well, he’ll suit me,’ said Lord Millington. ‘There is no comparison between the horses as to real value, but I’ll change even-handed if you like.’

‘I must have 50*l.* to the bargain,’ said our friend.

‘I won’t give it,’ said Lord Millington.

‘Well,’ said Captain King, who knew his man, ‘will you split the difference, and say 25*l.* and your horse with bridle and saddle? Yours is a better bridle than mine. What on earth made your man give you such a saddle? Mine will suit you far better.’

‘Agreed,’ said Lord Millington, taking out his note-case, and handing him two tens and a five.

‘I’ll send you a receipt. I like to have everything shipshape.’

‘Very well. Faith, I wish I rode like you. “E’en in our ashes live their wonted fires!” Should you ever meet *with an accident*, and break your neck, it will not be on *horseback*,’ said Lord Millington.

Captain King grinned at the equivocal compliment. ‘Maybe, maybe. I wish I could return the compliment! Good evening. I think that you will like that saddle; and let no one ride the cob but yourself. Always ride him with the curb, and don’t let him forget that you have spurs; he *likes* that sort of thing!’

‘Dear me, dear me!’ said Captain King to himself as he returned. ‘What a comfort it is to have the command of money!’ And so he rode quietly home, totally indifferent to the remark of an old Scotchwoman (whose son he had summoned for throwing a stone at one of his hens, which had had a fatal result — damages, 2s., costs, 18s., 20s. or fourteen days’ hard labour) —

‘Heigh, lads! see the de’il flee past on a snaw-drift!’

CHAPTER VII.

‘**I**NDEED,’ said the Bishop, ‘and so they have caught the men, have they?’

‘Yes,’ said Algernon. ‘By-the-bye, you were driving with Emily and her friend, I forgot, and could not have heard the news. By some strange chance they forgot to give us the earliest tidings. I rode over to Belton to-day, and the superintendent gave me the whole history of the affair. Knowing that there would be a hot pursuit after them, unable to get to London, they decided on remaining at Belton. The thimble-rig fellow, who was not much hurt after all, could not stay quietly in hiding; so his mate and himself dressed themselves, with a friend’s assistance, as members of the Society of Friends. He was, I understand, well got up. Wishing to hear the news, he got into an omnibus, and travelled some distance down Belton; but finding himself the hero of the day, and not being over well pleased thereat, left the omnibus, taking as a little souvenir the purse of a pretty Yorkshire girl (his next neighbour), who was travelling with her husband and baby. He had scarcely left the omnibus when she discovered her loss. Her husband started off in pursuit of the thief. She had her own suspicions; and seeing the Quaker gentleman standing in a doorway, she rushed up to him, said that she was just going to faint, would he hold the baby for her? Thinking himself unsuspected,

he took the child in his arms, and would have taken the mother too, but she declined his aid. He then said that if she were really going to faint, she had better go into a shop; which she did, following him and the baby. He said he had an appointment, and must leave instantly. She began to scream convulsively, and threw her arms round his neck. The man felt as if in a vice. A policeman passing by entered the shop; she became at once calm, and to his extreme surprise gave her friend with the broad-brimmed hat into custody.* The policeman immediately addressed him by name, telling him that he was wanted for robbing me. Up the husband came with a policeman, and in custody they brought his companion. On them they found all the spade guineas and notes, for they had not time to change them, and considered that they would be safest upon their own persons. Well, they are now in custody, and to-morrow they will be brought up before Lord Millington at the petty sessions. I hear that there will be one or two cases worthy of note. By-the-bye, Gawaine, haven't you a few of your old women to whitewash to-morrow *at sessions*, as they call it?'

'Well, yes,' said Gawaine; 'there is a perfect pest in my parish, a woman of horrible character; a fine handsome woman as ever you set eyes on, but she has proved a perfect curse to the parish. In my parish they make gloves for the London market, and a woman comes round once a month to the house of one of my parishioners, who collects for her. I tried to put down the gloving at first, but found it no use. It made the young women too independent, sitting to their work all day, and only leaving off just as twilight began; strolling about the village led

* Manchester Police Reports, 1860 (autumn).

to no good results. Well, I found it too strong for me, and had to give in. So the other day, when they had assembled at Jenny Smith's, waiting for the traveller, and were quietly engaged in tearing all the reputations to tatters within half a dozen miles, in comes this vile woman. Finding that they all tipped her the cold shoulder, she sat herself down, and proceeded to triturate the character of every woman's husband present. She came to me for a summons; I told her plainly that it would be of little use. The woman was wild with rage. She told me that they had torn off every rag of clothing she had on, and turned her out into the garden robed pretty much as Eve was before the Fall. I hesitated somewhat about a summons, when she left in a fury. "She didn't like the parsons, not she; she liked a gentleman, summat like Captain King. He never objected to sign a paper for a poor body — no, not he! — provided it never cost *him* nothing!"

'A very characteristic trait in our friend Peregrine's disposition,' observed Colonel Conyers. 'What does he expect to do with his money? Surely he cannot count on letters of credit to the next world; and as to that poor daughter of his, poor thing, he would sell *her* to the highest bidder.'

'I wish I had all his money,' said the Bishop.

'I don't think much of it would remain in your own pocket,' said Colonel Conyers. 'Remember, if ever thoroughly hard up, apply to me. I am not really a screw, though I may appear so occasionally. Without economy, I should never have got on with the small income I married on. Now, I don't spend half my income. But if I were not careful in small things, I should be in large.'

'Get into a HABIT of giving,' said the Bishop; 'Lady

Emily, I know, is your almoner to a great amount; but why not divide a certain sum annually among certain objects? Now, I have at present a pet scheme of my own. My sister attends to it—in fact, is the superintendent. We have a sort of college of ladies who feel themselves called to a holy life. They have each a parlour and bedroom. I have fitted up the college for them, not at my own expense: then I soon came to a pause. Lady Emily has, as you have been aware, been one of our chief supporters.'

'Well, but,' said the Colonel, 'I don't like mother superiors, and I don't like rosaries, and I don't like vespers, and I don't like complines, and I don't like sisterhoods in general.'

'Nor do I,' said the Bishop; 'not that I see any very great sin, but any imitation of things looked upon in general as peculiar to Rome is to be deprecated. These ladies are to all intents and purposes a set of godly women living together, most of them middle-aged, many young; but these, of course, are not allowed to take upon themselves the more onerous duties. None are expected to remain longer than they please. They wear no distinctive dress, except that they dress plainly, though handsomely. Crinolines are to be only two-thirds of the fashionable size, under nine feet in diameter; hats to be worn, but only a black feather—none of your magpies. In so far as the younger members are concerned, it gives them a sort of university education, they being too old for schools. My sister, a widow, of some five and forty years in age, rejoices not in the title of mother superior or lady abbess, but is known merely as Lady Elizabeth Lloyd. You remember her husband, poor Trulliber Lloyd, of Cwmwnllm. Poor fellow! he left her with only one son, who died.'

‘What is the use of all these women living together?’ said Colonel Conyers; ‘what do they do?’

‘Why, I will tell you. In the first place, they visit in the parish. In the second, they have a cooking class four days in the week; then they have a class for dress-making, cutting out, mending, &c.; then they have a certain number of young women who learn various household duties. At first there was a regular *émeute* in the place — not a woman would come; but as they employed a number of labourers on the farm — for they have taken a farm, rather a large one, near the old college — Elizabeth sent for all the labourers, and gave them some beer. Then she made them a short speech —

“Now, my men, I have sent for you to ask you three or four questions. In the first place, *do* you think we have expended our money on this place for *nothing*?”

“No, my lady!” they all exclaimed, for they had a very wholesome awe of her ladyship.

“Well,” said she, taking off her riding hat (for she had just returned from the farm), and swinging the whip in her hand backwards and forwards, a favourite trick of hers when put out (poor Lloyd used to feel a shivering fit come over him, he always said, when she did so), “now, my men, just attend to me! Do you like good dinners better than bad ones? Do you like clothes tidy and well mended better than rags and tatters? Lastly, do you like comfortable homes and high wages, paid in cash; or do you prefer discomfort and want?”

“Yes, my lady!” they all exclaimed, eagerly.

“Well, then, send your wives and daughters to the college to be taught. What do you suppose I have let the old abbey in Wales for, and come with my friends into this out-of-the-way place, but to do you good? and if you won’t be taught, neither shall you be fed. Now,

mark my words: I'll go back to Wales again; I'll put an agent into the college, who shall manage the farm; he shall pay you merely market prices for your wages, and though, of course, he will pay you in money, yet I'll engage such a man as will make your lives MISERABLE! Now we understand each other. Remember that the kitchen is full on Monday morning!" Out they all went looking thoroughly frightened.

"Well, my lord," said Lizzie to me with a low curtsy, "I think I have given them a rare fright this time. I have been over the farm, and it will pay well, stall-feeding. I have a great notion of trying spade husbandry. Now, remember, the college must be nearly self-supporting. I don't intend to 'pay the piper' always; it would do no good. In case of my death, you lose all my help; for I have very little but my dower, and that merely for my life. So the college must exist on its own resources."

'Now,' said the Bishop, 'I want to raise a certain sum for the future. Lizzie will buy the farm for a moderate sum, with trustees' consent.'

'Well, tell me what I am to give you, and it shall be done.'

'Very well,' said the Bishop, 'I will consider the matter, and let you know.'

'Stop,' said the Colonel. 'There are no complines, on your honour now?'

'I assure you there are not,' said the Bishop.

'Very well, then, I'll give you what you want.'

With these words the Colonel turned round, intending to break a lance with Gawaine relative to ecclesiastical matters in general, and was a little disgusted to find that Gawaine, in obedience to a hint from his wife, had strolled out with Algernon into the flower garden, unperceived by

the Bishop and Colonel Conyers, and, meeting the ladies in the rhododendron walk, wandered about till tea-time, Algernon giving a description of the old Grange, which he declared to be a place where no sensible woman would stay a day.

And so he went on rhodomontading in a very quaint and amusing way about things in general, giving racy descriptions of the scrapes they used to get into when he first joined; and how, at a grand ball given by the infantry, they had hunted a luckless individual, who had made himself very disagreeable to all the ladies present, all round the town, Algernon as huntsman, with a large hunting-whip in his hand, and the others giving tongue like dogs! how the unhappy man rushed through the Dean's gardens, just after the Dean's daughters had returned from the ball, who cheered them on lustily; and, finding no prospect of escape, fairly took to the water, followed by the whole pack, in full uniform, yelling like demons! how, after a splendid run of forty minutes without a check, they ran him to earth in some obscure street in the old cathedral city, after a chase of some three or four miles.

There is something exceedingly amusing in the way a man who, having outlived the follies of early youth, tells some ludicrous story of which, as a matter of principle, he thoroughly disapproves, but yet he can't help dealing very tenderly with his former self; and so Algernon went on in the most comical way, anecdote after anecdote, ending with a description of his hooking the bull; and then he proceeded to argue the matter most logically as to which of the high and mighty personages engaged could be said to have caught a Tartar. To be sure, the bull must feel a sort of touch of lumbago in the small of the back; but then HE himself had a sort of twinge in the

right side, where his wound had been; he rather thought that the bull and himself were both in for something unpleasant.

And so they strolled on together, Pen thinking him, with his light, active figure, blue eyes and blonde moustache, the *beau ideal* of a gallant knight. She did not admire the Crimean beard any more than Lady Emily, but she thought a little womanly tact would easily manage matters.

So the two loitered onwards, Algernon thinking that, only he had quite decided on not marrying, if he had not come to this decision, she would be a continued ray of sunshine in the old Grange.

Well, it couldn't be helped; and what was 300*l.* a-year, and an old Grange, not boggart-proof even? Well, she was a nice girl, as nice a girl as ever he had met in his life; but she was too tall, in fact nearly as tall as himself, particularly since she had adopted the military heels (he hated the fashion!); a brilliant complexion he didn't admire—no, there was always danger of consumption; and as to golden hair, call it what you like, there was always red in it. He hated red hair. Fancy half a dozen little red-heads! No, it couldn't be done. And so he argued on, much as a man does with his heart a little failing him, arguing against *fate*, as it were.

'Dear me!' said he, 'I know nothing more delightful than strolling about on the green sward, just before twilight, on a summer's evening. There is a sort of calm and tranquil stillness, as though the heat and turmoil of the day were overpast. How sweet the flowers are! Do you hear the nightingale in the grove yonder? Look at the rabbits coming out to feed.'

'I may be fanciful, but it always puts me in mind of the evening of life; all the trials of life, its anxieties and

troubles, at an end; its course finished. A sort of calm and placid decay of sensibilities and perceptions; such as I can fancy the holy Simeon and the devout Anna to have experienced, as they tarried day by day in the temple, waiting that they might see the promised salvation, and then depart in peace.'

'Well,' said Pen, 'I often look upon dear mamma as a sort of instance of that feeling. A long illness, the effect of a severe accident, in the first place, has thoroughly weaned her from earthly cares and anxieties. My aunt saves her from all trouble. She is most anxious to please her, most anxious to make her happy, but it must only be after *her own fashion*. She is some ten years or more older than mamma, and has always been accustomed to have her own way in everything. I have to give way completely; but what can one do with a person whose sole object appears to be to promote one's happiness, though she has her own way of doing it?'

'I know the sort of person,' said Algernon; 'kill you with kindness.'

'I have seen very little of her myself,' said Pen, 'till lately: I was then at school—a great nuisance—I wanted to be at home with mamma, but it couldn't be managed; so I said nothing more about the matter. Ah! there is Lady Emily calling to us. How hot and dry the grass feels to-night! we shall have rain before to-morrow,' said Pen.

'How do you know that?' said Algernon.

'Oh, I have always observed that when there is no dew at this time, there is always rain the next day.'

'Very well, Pen, we shall see. It appears to me almost yesterday when you were a great girl, with short dresses, with a passion for carrying food for the dogs in your pocket. How time passes!'

‘ Well,’ said Pen, ‘ you are not changed, only much less old than I used to consider you when you encouraged me in every sort of mischief; but I fancy that in early life, when we do not see people often, every time we meet them they appear at first to be different people: there is a sort of present individuality about them totally distinct from that of former years; it is only afterwards that little traits of character display themselves, stamping the identity of the character, though seen from different aspects.’

The next morning Algernon rose early, and found it a hot, rainy day; the rain not coming down in a torrent, but just that continued, slow, pouring rain, just as though it could afford taking its ease, and, having the whole week to do it in, had no occasion for hurry.

‘ It will be a wet day, a thorough wet day. What’s o’clock?—a quarter to six. Apparently been raining all night: a soft, warm rain, too. Well, I’ll have a turn at the Nun’s pool. Wherever there is one big trout there is sure to be another. I hope the bull won’t be there to-day. Shall I take the revolver?—no, I think that he will have had enough of it.’

So he got up and dressed: passing down the long corridor, Pen’s door blew open. There was Lady Emily shrieking with laughter, a small china bowl in her hand, sprinkling Pen with cold water, who earnestly entreated her not to make her get up in the middle of the night! Pen looked prettier than ever, with her long curls flowing nearly to her feet in golden waves. Pen, looking up with a scream of horror, made a dive into the lowest depths; Lady Emily rushed to the door to close it.

‘ O, you Algernon, is it? Now, Pen, if you won’t get up, I’ll open the door wide. We breakfast at eight, you and I, and you *shall* be up in time to-day.’

So Pen very unwillingly crept out of her nest.

Lady Emily seeing her fairly into her shower-bath, and hearing a little scream, followed by a torrent of water, thought she might leave her in perfect safety.

And so Lady Emily went downstairs, having an expedition in view for the rest of the day.

Colonel Conyers and Gawaine had to be at the court-house. And after breakfast, Algernon having returned from his fishing with a decent basket of trout, they started off for the day—Lady Emily, Algernon, and Pen in the pony phaeton; Colonel Conyers and Gawaine in the drag—Colonel Conyers tooling his thorough-bred team with an affectation of great professional skill.

After proceeding a mile, they overtook a short, stout, respectable small-farmer style of man, well dressed, apparently walking against time, with coat and waistcoat on his arm, trudging on in his shirt-sleeves.

‘Here, my man,’ cried the Colonel, ‘where are you going to?’

‘I be going to sessions.’

‘Ah! indeed; so am I. Jump up. So you’re going to the sessions,’ observed the Colonel, somewhat absently, being engaged in double-thonging a refractory wheeler. ‘So you are going to the sessions, eh? One of the witnesses?’

‘No,’ said the man, ‘I am not one of the witnesses exactly.’

‘Prosecutor, eh?’

‘No; I am not *prosecutor*; the fact is, I be going to be *tried*. I’m out on bail for stealing hay; but I never done’d it, though.’

‘Humph!’ said the Colonel to himself; ‘this comes of making chance acquaintances.’ And not in the best of humour he landed his man at the door of the court-house, where the officials, seeing him come under the wing of the Colonel, treated him with the most marked respect, much

to Gawaine's amusement, and much also to the Colonel's annoyance.

'Confound it,' said the Colonel to himself, 'the rascal will get off in consequence. The witnesses—hang them!—will think that I am a party in the matter, and soften down matters.'

So the Colonel's protégé was tried at once, and, with a sort of nimbus of reflected light, was acquitted in compliment to the Colonel, who sat 'like a bear with a sore back' during the trial of the case, entirely misunderstood by the witnesses, who were his tenants, and who attributed it to anxiety on the prisoner's account. So it was; but from a very different cause.

Then Gawaine's case was called on, and presently Gawaine entered the hall of justice! a narrow, low room. A long passage runs up the middle of the room, not unlike a church, with forms or benches on each side, at right angles to the aisle; these were crowded chiefly with the friends of the prosecutors and witnesses; the prisoners also were represented by a number of disreputable, lost-looking women. Four or five stalwart-looking policemen lounged about the door, markedly (rather too much so) civil to the leading gentry, and proportionately rough to the rest of her Majesty's subjects, particularly to those whose relations were for a time under a cloud.

Gawaine looked round about him. There was none of that listlessness often visible in a mob, when the greater number scarcely know what has brought them together. There was a nervous, anxious look about most of those who appeared to be interested in the case. The six large windows were covered with moisture, and the atmosphere of the room was oppressively hot, heavy, and dank. Three policemen officiously conducted him up the central alley to a sort of sanctum at the other end, fenced off from the rest

of the room by three or four curious things, much resembling the old-fashioned settles at a public-house, with the seats turned outwards, upon which seats the witnesses stood, and peered fearfully over the backs of the aforesaid settles upon a heterogeneous assembly of attorneys and attorneys' clerks, who sat at a table within the enclosure.

On two sides of the table ran a low gallery, some six feet from the ground, in which sat the magistrates, Lord Millington, Colonel Conyers, Algernon, Captain Peregrine King, and sundry others,—Gawaine sitting beside Lord Millington.

On the benches of the settles stood the prosecutor and prisoners. The prosecutor, a tall, bold-looking woman, dressed in black, a small black bonnet with a little white frill round the edge, very handsome, but a depraved sensual look about the mouth; she was remarkably well got up, and was evidently doing 'injured innocence.'

Next to her stood Jane King, a short, thick-set, determined-looking woman, who looked as honest as she looked hot-tempered. She had been a perfect virago, but Gawaine had been very kind to her during her long illness, and had acquired great influence over her; and she, once a Cruiser, in a state of nature, had become as obedient as the aforesaid steed under the hands of the skilful operator; she was now his favourite parishioner.

Betty Smith stood next to her; a meek, gentle, good creature, kind and good to all. Did a neighbour fall sick? Betty Smith was at once glad to sit up with her night after night, without hope or reward, merely from a sense of duty. Not that Gawaine esteemed her so very much. He infinitely preferred Jenny King. Why was this? Why is it that we all are ready to bow ourselves down before a rattling bad temper?—we cast ourselves at its feet, and beg it to walk over us as softly as practicable. Do

we value a sweet temper, a gentle and kind disposition? Do we *honour* it? Not a bit in the world. We make a perfect *door mat* of it. To whom is the greatest respect paid in the household? Who is always best attended to—whose horse is never too tired to go out—whose dress is always finished first on an emergency? To whom is Paterfamilias, when he returns home in a vile humour, perfectly civil? Who is the only person in the house he dare not snub on such occasion?—the child with the rattling bad temper.

But to return to our narrative. Poor, gentle Betty Smith! she looked as if she would have thankfully compromised the matter for a mild sentence of penal servitude for five years. Jane King battled the matter out boldly. The prosecutor told her tale of artless innocence. She had gone to Jane King's house with her work as usual, when they all abused her. She believed that her husband, once my Lord there's keeper, had caught Tom King poaching. She had said nothing; no, not she; and they rushed at her, and tore off every shred of clothing, except a bit of an old stuff gown she had on. She then held up, much to the amusement of the Court, an old piece of brown stuff, looking more like a fishing-net than anything else.—‘There, my Lord and gentlemen, that's a decent dress for a respectable married woman, and mother of a family.’ The Bench of course roared. Indeed, the Colonel looked at Lord Millington anxiously once or twice, apprehending apoplexy.

Then Jenny King, representing the opposite side, had her innings. She delivered a plain, unvarnished tale, quite in the way of a woman who is telling the truth; and she told her story pretty much as she had previously done to Gawaine; and when she came to relate the scandalous boast of the prosecutor, she fired up then. ‘She

did tear her clothes off, my Lord, a nasty, wicked hussy; and scratched her right well, too, my Lord; and if she hadn't got away, I'd have smacked her right well with the taws—I would, my Lord;' and, turning to the prosecutor, she thus addressed her:

'And so, you wicked, resolute woman, you! you calls yourself a respectable married woman, do you? How many husbands have you *living*, you wicked, resolute woman, you? 'And you led away, too, poor Sam Parker, and made his lass he was going to wed drown herself; you did, you wicked, resolute woman.'

'You did, you wicked, resolute woman,' echoed the rest of the prisoners.

'Didn't you break poor Jessie Jones's heart?'

'You did, you wicked, resolute woman,' cried the chorus.

'You've been wed to twenty of them.'

'You have, you wicked, resolute woman,' screamed the chorus. And thus Jenny King went on through a long catalogue of crimes, increasing in darkness as she went on; and again and again did the chorus testify their yell of assent, *blazing* forth.

The Court was convulsed.

'Woman,' said Lord Millington, 'what have you to say to this? Much of what has been alleged is a matter of notoriety. Of course, we dismiss the complaint.'

'My Lord,' said the prosecutor, 'I am a much-injured woman. I was not always in the humble position of a gamekeeper's wife. The daughter of a noble Lord, brought up in affluence, turned adrift on the world when a mere child, having neither money, friends, nor name (here Lord Millington winced)—who can be surprised at my being what I am? You, my Lord, I hear, have more little ones than the Queen (God bless her, she's a good

woman !') though my Lady has been dead these twenty years. See that they come not into this state of torment.' And drawing herself up, she indignantly strode out of the room, the very policemen making way for her.

All looked grave but Captain Peregrine King, who grinned like a senile ape. 'Faith, Millington caught it,' said he.

Lord Millington went home, and made several important additions to his will.

The next case was Algernon's. The thimble-rig fellow and his comrade were brought up in custody—a short, middle-aged man, with piercing black eyes, large black whiskers, black hair slightly sprinkled with grey, small aquiline nose, very white teeth, which almost glittered from the contrast afforded by his swarthy gipsy complexion. He was dressed in a sort of velveteen shooting-jacket, a waistcoat of a dark brown, probably taken in exchange from some gentleman's servant; drab breeches, blue worsted stockings, and high-lows. His companion was dressed in the same garb in which he had been captured; he was evidently a fellow of infinite humour. He had assumed the innocently wide-awake look, according well with the broad brim, and he persisted in theeing and thouing the Bench in the most amusing way. The very policemen could not help relapsing into the professional hilarity, which appears to consist in a grin with a protest. His name, he said, was Ephraim Pease, and he had lately come from Darlington. He was travelling, he said, for the noted firm of Price and Freemantle, the great ironmasters there. He had lately left the north, and was PROFESSIONALLY engaged in Belton (he would be *sworn* he was, coolly observed Captain Peregrine King). He, in short, defended himself with remarkable talent, persisting in addressing the chairman as 'Friend

Conyers,' to the immense amusement of the mob. The police endeavoured to stop him, but it was not the least use in the world. He only made them a short, but exceedingly clever address, on the sin and vanity of empty titles. The case was too clear. Algernon and Charley swore distinctly to them, and they were both committed to take their trial at the following assizes.

'Friend Ephraim, thou standest committed,' observed Captain King, with a triumphant smile.

'Hast thee heard, Friend Peregrine, from thy young man, even Joseph?' And so they were both committed, in spite of a vain attempt to prove an *alibi*.

Slaney, the thimble-rig man's daughter (an elegant, innocent-looking girl of about sixteen—a beautifully delicate-looking likeness of Slaney himself), came forward to wear that Pease (or Foster, as his real name appears to have been) was in her company during the whole of that day. She cast a despairing glance at *her lover*, as he was removed from the dock. Poor thing! it was too evident. So Captain King rode home. Was Captain King a happy man? I really don't know. Certainly at this time there was a sort of fretting sore that caused him much pain and suffering. Like Ahab of old, he coveted the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. In other words, his pleasure-grounds were bounded by a beautiful, park-like field—bounded on three sides by the turnpike-road, and on the fourth by Captain King's property—and consisted of about twenty acres, thrown together into one large and beautifully wooded field. Huge elms, exquisitely grouped, with a few glorious old oaks that had stood there for centuries. 'And Naboth had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers.'

Now, this field had lately come into the possession of one Briggs, and Briggs was known, in vulgar parlance, to be

somewhat hard up; in fact, he must 'sell or sail,' as the Great Duke once said. Now, Briggs had reasons of his own, which need not here be more particularly alluded to, for hating Captain King with an intense hatred; and he had sworn that, sooner than let him have that field, Colonel Conyers, who was a good man and a true, should have it at half price. Captain King had hit upon a notable device. He had sent all the way to London for a well-known solicitor, who was to buy the land to erect villas on speculation, which he was to represent as likely to be a great eyesore to Captain King; and so the twain sat at an early dinner. Old Peregrine was not in the habit of giving dinners; but when he did, it was in a gentlemanly way. The dining-room, a fair-sized, lofty room, with one large window reaching down to the ground, looked out upon the coveted field. The room itself was handsomely furnished; for it was Captain King's own room, and on himself he spared no expense. The walls were painted crimson, and grained to imitate morocco leather; the room had been fitted up entirely with old oak cabinets, picked up for a song when such things were not considered valuable. Some of the chairs were of old oak, splendidly carved; 'but Millington was not for a deal,' and so they remained there. The rest of the chairs were of tulip wood, splendid, but the carriage from India would have been ruinous. But a friend of Captain King's wanted a few chairs for his yacht at Calcutta, and they must be of a peculiar sort, to admit of their being managed in some way or other (I don't know how quite, not being a yachting man), to be suitable; these did exactly. His friend gave a high price for them as a makeshift; Captain King having kindly offered to take them back at half price. So he sent his agent to meet him at Southampton.

The two sat together at a long table, over half of which a cloth had been laid. In the middle of the oasis stood a splendid Indian centre piece, full of flowers, presented to him for some gallant deed by his comrades. They had returned from some little plundering expedition—he and his troop of light horse (natives, clever fellows); they went by the name of ‘The Sparrowhawks,’ after their gallant commander. The dinner was served in six little silver dishes, on the covers of which stood a peregrine falcon, with the motto, ‘Thou shalt want ere I want.’ The dinner was plain and unpretending, but in exceedingly good taste, and they were waited upon by a respectable-looking maid-servant of about thirty-five, who had been brought up by the late Mrs. King, who looked exceedingly well in her black silk gown, and elegant cap with matve ribbons. Just the style of servant for an elderly widower.

‘Try one of these patés, Mr. Jenkyns; you will find them excellent. Just the least drop of garlic to flavour them. Take a root of garlic, boil it for half an hour, then take out three or four spoonfuls of the water, put it into some white sauce, and then you have it. By-the-bye, were you ever in Italy? There your valet goes round with the sauce, and just gives you a *breath* of it on your paté. What a nuisance it is to have one’s stories repeated, and mangled in the operation! I was dining with Lord Millington the other day; Colonel Melton was there (a thick-headed man as ever lived). I detected him telling my pet story, and, hang the fellow! if he didn’t tell it something in this way: “When you dine in Italy, a long-haired, moustached fellow comes round, puts a head or two of garlic into his mouth, munches it, goes to each man in succession, lifts up the top of his paté, and just gives him a breath of the garlic in passing.” Faith, I

thought Millington, who knew the story well, would have dropped out of his chair. Now, you know what to do with Briggs. He must never find out that I am in reality the purchaser. You understand, don't you? All right. Well, I would lend you my horse, if you thought you could ride him. By-the-bye, didn't you ride a steeple-chase once?'

So Mr. Jenkyns started off on Lucifer, who was disposed to play tricks, but soon found that he had a Yorkshireman to deal with. Off he rode to the Abbey farm, and arrived there in due course of time. Mr. Jenkyns had an eye for the picturesque, so he pulled up his horse when he was about some fifty yards from the farmhouse. The moat had been unusually wide, but now it was turned into a horse pond in front of the farmyard, and the rest of it filled up. Over what remained of the moat was a long, narrow bridge of comparatively modern date; at one end was a ruined gateway, flanked by the remains of two round towers.

'Dear me,' said Mr. Jenkyns, 'that must be very old, to judge from its sharp-pointed Gothic archway. Captain King spoke of some tradition respecting a fair dame who received King John here. The house and woods round it would be worth any sum of money at Leeds or Manchester.'

The house itself was not less striking, though of a more modern date, with large oriel windows; a beautiful parapet ran round the roof, of quaterfoils with shields. The house was not large, but had evidently once formed a portion of a very large building.

As Mr. Jenkyns rode up, Farmer Briggs came out to meet him.

'How do you do, sir?' said Mr. Briggs; 'walk in, sir, please. Here, Tom, take the gentleman's horse. Dear

me, it's a fine horse—it is, for sure. You're not one from these parts, I suppose, sir?'

'No, I came all the way from Downton, Lord Millington's; I was with his lordship on a matter of business. I fancy you have seen his lordship on that horse before now?'

'I have seen his lordship precious nearly off that horse before now. I made so bold as to advise him never to ride that horse again. He will break his neck some day.'

'Well, Mr. Briggs, I am agent for a building company, and I hear that there is a beautiful piece of ground in front of Captain *Kay's* house that belongs to you, and I should be glad to have a deal with you.'

'Captain *King* you mean,' said Farmer Briggs; 'I know the man — precious old scoundrel as ever lived,' he added inwardly. 'Well, sir, I won't deny I am hard up and want the money. The land is good, and I must have 100*l.* the acre.'

'I'll give you 95*l.*,' said Mr. Jenkyns; '100*l.* is too much.'

'Not a farthing less,' said Farmer Briggs, 'and you will make a pretty penny by letting it out for building sites.'

'Well, *done then* for 100*l.* an acre. Now let me look at your title — that will do. Now, as you seem rather hard up for the money, shall I give you a cheque for 500*l.* on account? I'll draw up a paper for you to sign. Very well! Now, will you sign this?'

'Just stop a minute, sir. Are you buying this land for Captain King?'

'Do you doubt my word?' said Mr. Jenkyns, with affected indignation.

'No, I don't, sir, but meant no offence. You are quite SURE?' said he.

‘Man, I have answered you once, and that must do.’

‘Well, sir, I am very sorry—very sorry, indeed; but I can’t let you have the land. No, sir, I can’t. I promised my old friend Peregrine King should have the refusal if I ever sold it. No, sir, I can’t indeed. It would never do to *disappoint* him!’

Mr. Jenkyns looked at him. There was a shrewd, wide-awake look about the man that could not be mistaken. So Mr. Jenkyns thanked the farmer for his hospitality, and quietly rode home.

‘What a state old Peregrine will be in,’ thought he to himself; ‘how on earth did the fellow find me out?’

Presently a groom cantered past him on Lord Millington’s cob.

‘Ah,’ thought he, ‘the murder’s out now—how unlucky! That’s the Millington livery. Dear me, who are these people coming?’ said he to himself, as the pony phaeton dashed past. ‘That’s a fine soldierlike-looking fellow; and that magnificent-looking girl is, I suppose, his wife. What a superb woman! and she knows how to dress, too—that hat with the white ostrich feathers! Ah, a lovely portrait in a splendid frame! Who can it be? Lord Millington has no daughter. Can that lovable-looking woman be his sister, and the other a married niece? Well, I should like to have a daughter just such another. But what would she care for a middle-aged, white-headed father like myself, with a young fellow like that at her elbow? Now, the elder is more in my line—a different style of beauty, but very lovely, too. Why shouldn’t I marry, give up the office, and buy an old place? Some one said that my grandfather’s was to be had. Poor fellow! he suffered from the law—no wonder he brought me up an attorney. Well, I’ll buy the old place if it is to be had. I should think that the mortgages

were to be had cheap. Well, the poor old man (now, I trust, a saint in heaven!) would have liked to have the old place once more again in the family. Well, I suppose I am no worse than my neighbours. What a rascal old Peregrine is! Dear me, I shall be fifty this very year: hair white as the driven snow, very wrinkled and old-looking, I have no doubt. I probably look sixty, perhaps more. Why must I always be cracking jokes with old Truefit? "Hair pretty thick for an old man of eighty, Mr. Truefit, eh?" "Dear me, sir, so it is. Never should have taken you, sir, to be above seventy; don't look a day older." Quiet, you stupid brute, you!' as Lucifer, seeing the Conyers Rabbit by some park gates which they were passing, began his war dance; 'keep still, will you?—don't think that you have Lord Millington on your back, you confounded brute.'

'Deuced glad he *has* your neck to experimentalize on, and not mine,' observed an elderly gentleman riding out of the park gates; he had just been giving some directions to the woman at the lodge.

'I really beg ten thousand pardons, my Lord, for taking liberties with your name.'

'A trifle, my good sir, to the liberties you wished Lucifer to take with my neck. What are *you* doing down here?'

'Oh, I have some little business to transact for Captain King.'

'Ah, I thought so. Rather a sell, eh? My man happened to be there. You'll find Peregrine *pleasant* to-night. Better stay and dine here.'

'Many thanks, my Lord, but I have already dined; and should I find Peregrine *nasty*, as we used to say at Winchester, I shall make a run of it. Whose carriage was that?'

‘Lady Emily’s.’

‘Splendid girl, isn’t she?—a certain Miss Blunt. I believe her father or grandfather was agent, or house-steward, or something to the old Earl, and then made a lot of money cotton-spinning. He was a very decent fellow. Dear me! if I were a young fellow like you, I should try and cut out Algernon Conyers. Well, time plays the deuce with us all. He’s a capital fellow. I fancy they are coming from the cricket-match. Eleven of All England against Boddington; some twenty-two of Boddington, with half-a-dozen players, more or less. Dear me! the game is much changed since my day, when they gave us easy pitches, and we hit fourers, fivers, sixers, and an occasional sevens. Round-hand bowling is merely another name for flinging; every ball is now a sneaker. Alas, alas! *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis*. I could once get a pretty tidy score—years ago.’

‘Well, good day, if you won’t stay.’

‘Humph!’ said Captain Peregrine King, ‘*that’s* a nuisance; what’s to be done I don’t know. Shall I threaten to indict him for meditating to sell his land for building purposes, which would prove a nuisance? Wouldn’t do. Confound it! It would be indeed a nuisance if he could dispose of it for building purposes; but it can’t be done; nobody would buy it—certainly not for the next ten years, if then even. So Lumley met Lady Emily, and that pretty girl with her. I suppose she is booked for Algernon. A good fellow enough. Poor fellow! he only wants one thing. Certainly he will never *make* a fortune; far too careless about money. I’d back that infernal young cub of a nephew against him any day; aye, or that confounded niece of his. And that long-legged Bishop trying to do me out of the ten shillings! Told him I had the privilege of being my own

almoner; did him there, i' faith. So that girl is old Tab's niece! I hear Tab is worth 100,000*l.*, say 60,000*l.*; put that in the Three per Cents., say 1800*l.* a-year; she would prove rather a Lucifer. Tab must be considerably above fifty; she had a high temper, but I have had a little practice in that line myself. My dear departed angel had at first a playful way of getting her leg over the traces; well, I managed her, and not by Rarey's system either. Her sister-in-law can't live very long; that girl will never stand her, not she, if she has anything of Blunt's spirit. What capital dinners he used to give! He gave me a tidy price for the Mahratta's service of silver plate. Well, those were jolly days, and jolly boys, too. No one could manage them but myself; a little free in their notions of plunder I own, but they never forgot their old commander, and I always gave cash down. The General did once, at first, make some strong remarks about the diamonds, but he did not understand me then; we were better friends afterwards. Poor fellow! he never entirely got the better of his *lameness*. Well, if people will play with edged tools, they must take the consequences. Poor old Tab! she had a great horror of becoming an old maid. I fancy it won't be lessened by this time. My poor departed angel was a sort of twentieth cousin. So Lumley Jenkyns wouldn't stay; knew he had made a mess of it. Well, I think I'll toddle off to bed.'

So Algernon returned from his fishing, and looked rather sheepish when asked what his plans were for the day. He was going per dog-cart to Boddington, to play in the match. He had seen a specimen of Christopher Columbus's bowling, and though himself active as a cat, *didn't like it*.

'They'll beat us in one innings,' said he. 'I am rather out of sorts, too, myself. Emily, I know, will want to go.'

However, I'll go quietly over in the dog-cart. An hour will be ample. As for the King of Oude, he is worse than Christopher Columbus.'

'Well, Algernon, you have not answered my question. We are going to Boddington to see the cricket-match. Pen has a great fancy to go. We can give you a seat if you like.'

So Algernon had to submit with as good a grace as possible.

On they went to a huge field beyond Boddington, into which they drove. In the centre of the field stood a small party, playing all sorts of antics, more like a set of kittens than anything else. A still larger party, got up in the winged-Mercury style, with broad-brimmed Greek-looking hats, and greaves on their legs, clad in tight-fitting dresses of flannel. A huge circle was described of some ninety yards in circumference, and it was marked out by the banners belonging to the Boddington Sunday-school; in fact, the same which had figured at the laying of the foundation-stone of the new church; the keys of St. Peter, the cross-swords, the Conyers' cats-heads, were all there, and behind them stood a huge multitude of all ranks, some five or six thousand; beautifully dressed ladies, fast-looking very young men, rather too slangy to be quite gentlemen, carriages of all shapes and descriptions, marquees, a huge brick building, not unlike the grand-stand at a county race-course, only that it had a dowager air about it; and an immense mob of shrewd-looking men of all ages, chiefly factory operatives, dressed for the most part in dark-coloured velveteens, who watched the whole proceedings with the greatest possible interest, thorough connoisseurs, betting voraciously.

Boddington went in first, the King of Oude and Christopher Columbus doing the bowling. An unpleasant

remark had been made that the Eleven of All England counted on an easy victory, and did not intend to TROUBLE themselves overmuch. This having come to their ears, they had quite made up their minds to give no cause for such a rumour.

In went Captain Spatterdust, of the Boddington Yeomanry. His career was brief, though glorious. A tempting slow ball, underhand, from the King of Oude, pitching about two yards from the wicket, tempted him out of his ground; he missed it, and sprung back instantly — too late! Christopher Columbus, the wicket-keeper, had stopped the ball, and sent it through his wicket. It appeared to have been done with one single movement, just as a cat strikes a bird with her paw.

A wild cheer burst forth from the unwashed amateurs; sad presage of evil for the Boddingtonians.

Number Two went in, kept well in his ground, stopped every ball well for about four balls; the fifth ball was caught by Christopher the unrivalled, almost on the ground, a foot or two from the bat.

The unwashed could not believe their eyes. Betting in favour of All England.

Presently came the King of Oude's turn, a tall, sinewy, fine-looking man, who bowled like a catapult. He did not waste a second in delivering the ball. Three steps back, three steps forward, and the ball flew straight to the wicket as a line.

Algernon, who was now in, could make nothing of it for a time, contenting himself with stopping everything. Then he got a run, then he caught a ball fairly on the hop, striking it with his whole strength.

‘That’s a fiver!’ cried the unwashed. ‘Hurra for the Major!’

Nebuchadnezzar bounded forward like a panther —

touched the ball (he did not *appear* to do more), sending it straight to the wicket.

Algernon just in his ground as Christopher Columbus sent it *through* his wicket. 'Touch and go!' said he.

Five to four against Boddington. Boddingtonians not over-sanguine.

Algernon soon got over the fast catapult style of bowling. Christopher Columbus plagued him dreadfully. A long, slow style,—the most tempting of all; balls pitching everywhere but straight for the wicket, and then in the most extraordinary way screwing in, Algernon with all his care only just saving himself; the terrible King of Oude just behind him. Did he stop a ball to the off-side, the King had it to a dead certainty. Four men of his own side bowled out, or stumped out. One gallant fellow, given to cutting out work for himself, adopted a style of his own, now and then dashing wildly forward and securing a few runs, somewhat perplexing Christopher Columbus for a few minutes. He could make nothing of him during that over.

The King of Oude made his first ball bound in an extraordinary way, straight over his shoulder. He missed it, caught by Christopher, and through his wicket, before he had time to turn round.

Ten of Boddington out, with a score of twenty-two! Alas! alas!

The unwashed were almost speechless with astonishment. The panthers bounding about the field, not a ball passed them. A twoer was a rare event, and the single runs were well worked for. The men were so beautifully placed that not a ball could pass them.

Soon all were out, with a score of something like thirty-five. Then the Eleven went in.

The bowling was very third-rate, and the fielding worse.

Christopher Columbus and his friend went in. The King of Oude played audaciously, sending the ball flying to all parts of the field. Boddington played as men do who have not the ghost of a chance. At last they got the Eleven out, with a score of one hundred and thirty to thirty-five! — not very pleasant. They then retired to dine — a far more pleasant thing.

‘Well,’ said Algernon to Lady Emily, ‘I have a tolerably quick eye and ready hand; but I never saw such bowling before. The gallant lieutenant, as he passed me, observed, “Thank goodness my turn’s over, and that confounded ball has not gone THROUGH me, and has left my head on my shoulders.” Home is, I suppose, the next move: what say you, Pen?’ and so they started.

‘Well,’ said Lady Emily, ‘there are worse things than a low open barouche with four ponies; what think you, Pen?’

‘Well, I quite agree with you for my part,’ said Algernon.

‘Now, Algernon, can’t you tell us some things about your residence in the North, when you were quartered at Belton?’

‘In other words,’ said Algernon, ‘*say something funny!*’ which is quite sufficient to FLOOR a shy individual like myself. You know, I suppose, that Gawaine had to take the duty at one of the churches at Belton for two or three months, whilst the incumbent, an old college friend, was being married. I think Gerald dined at mess once; but never again did he show his face there. It was all very well whilst we were in the dining room; but in the withdrawing room afterwards the Colonel got hold of some pet scheme of Gawaine’s about monasteries or something of that sort, so that he bolted at once. They chaffed him unmercifully, and you know Gawaine has a great

horror of chaff, particularly when there happens to be long odds against him ; and, I must confess, to have the fire of the whole mess directed against you is no joke — half the fellows pretending to take your part, and then touching you up whenever they had a chance — of course all done in perfect good nature, but still not pleasant.

‘ After Gawaine went we had a little race round the room ; we used to manage it in this way : you sat astride a chair with your face to the back, twisting your feet round the legs of the chair so as not to touch the ground with your feet, and then you make the chair bound forwards. It used to be great fun ; we generally started three at a time. Suppose we try it to-night after dinner ? The bishop shall be clerk of the course. I think that I could manage side saddles for yourself and Pen. You would have to put your feet through the back of the chair ; yes, that would do capitally ! I think that I should back Pen. You may be sure that Gerald, with those long legs of his, is well up in it.

‘ Oh, about Gawaine ! well, one day he came to the barracks in a great state. It appeared that there was a rascally shoemaker who was in the habit of tyrannizing over everybody ; in fact, he was a public nuisance. Great complaints were continually made to the incumbent about him. The school children, in passing his house, used to stop a few seconds to look at him when at his work ; he then was in the habit of rushing out at them, and kicking them with his wooden clogs. Now, complaints had already been made to Gawaine about the man ; who, strange to say, having a perfect horror of children, thought the man not so far wrong.

‘ However, that morning the schoolmistress, a very little woman, but, like all little people, with a notion of her own dignity, had happened to pass through the alley in which

his house was situated; being half drunk, he caught her up, and whipped her — upon my word he did! She was furious, as you may suppose, and instantly took out a summons. Now, the man was largely employed at the barracks, and Gawaine wanted my support, so we had decided to take away our custom from him. Our Colonel's daughters were very indignant; I believe they would have horsewhipped the man if they had met him. So the Colonel had given me his authority to act for him. So Gawaine and I strolled down the town, and saw the schoolmistress, who was in an awful state of fury. We sent for the man, but he declined making his appearance; so Gawaine and I went to his house. He was not at home. Strolling together about the town, a curious sort of individual came up to Gawaine, and thus accosted him:

““ What dost thee want wi' me, felley? ”

““ What do I want *you* for? ” said Gawaine, “ I don't want you at all. ”

““ My oldest girl said, ‘ Dost thee know, feyther, that felley as works for th' parson at St. John's (who is playing) comed for thee; thee is wanted about schoolmistress. ’

““ Aye, wench,” say I, “ how dost thee know? ”

““ Dunnot thee know, feyther,” says th' lass o' mine, “ that schoolmistress has taken th' law of thee. Thee hads't better find the man,” says hoo, “ or thee'lt catch it. ”

““ Nay, nay, lass,” says I; “ I'm a Lancashire lad, and I ve got my clogs on. ”

““ Now! what dost thee want with me, felley? ”

“ Gawaine looked at him as if he would have eaten him.

““ Oh, you are the man, are you? Man, I wanted to see you, thinking that perhaps you might be anxious to make some atonement for what you have done. The schoolmistress has applied for a summons, which has been granted; of course, if the case goes before the magis-

trates, you will be fined severely ; and not only that, but Captain Conyers here has decided that the custom of the barracks shall be given to some one more worthy of support than yourself."

'I of course assented to this. The man looked rather taken aback.

'"Eh ! Parson," said he, "ask schoolmistress to forgive me."

'"I'll do nothing of the sort," said Gawaine.

'"Eh, dear !" said the man, "what will you take to square it?" said he, growing alarmed, and somewhat changing his style of address, being frightened out of his theeing and thouing !

'"Man !" said Gawaine, drawing himself up, his pale beardless face looking still paler ; "I *intercede* for you : *why* should I intercede for you ? I look upon you as a perfect savage, little better than a brute beast : had you expressed any amount of contrition for your outrage, had you said that as an *atonement*, you wished to offer something for the use of the sick and needy, I might then have been inclined to think about it."

'"Eh, man ! how much can you do it for ?"

'Gawaine, knowing nothing about the manufacturing districts, was thinking about five shillings would be the sum, that being a formidable fine in the agricultural districts. I nudged his elbow to impress *caution* upon his mind, and he took the hint.

'"I think, my friend, that you are in for something unpleasant."

'"Well, master," said the man, "what will you take ? If a trifle, summut like ten bob, would do."

'"Ten shillings !" said Gawaine, who now had his cue : "If you had said two sovereigns, I might have thought of it."

“Eh, dear! said the man, “it’s nigh upon a week’s wage: say thirty shillings, master, and I’ll square it.”

“Not one farthing under two pounds,” said Gawaine; “and even then I won’t *promise* to intercede for you. Of course if your case goes before the Bench your money will be returned to you again; but bring the two sovereigns before seven to-night, and I’ll think about it.”

Accordingly the man brought the money, at least part of it; I think that it was a pound. Gawaine told him that it wouldn’t do, but that he must bring the rest.

The next morning the man brought the money; so Gawaine gave him a note to the schoolmistress, requesting her to pass the matter by, on his paying all expenses. Then Gawaine had a talk with him about his ill-treatment of his wife.

“I am told,” said he, “that you beat her so dreadfully that there is not a sound place about her; that her legs are one mass of bruises. Surely there can be no comfort in living a cat-and-dog sort of life; you promised to be kind to that woman; to protect her from all ill; and you treat her worse than you do your dog. I dare say that you treat your daughter in the same way.”

“Nay, sure, hoo’s a fine girl, is wench; eh, dear, she broke my head with poker t’other neet; eh, dear, hoo did: hoo takes after th’ owd dog, hoo *does*.”

“Well,” said Gawaine, “I hope she will take the poker to YOU whenever you ill-treat your wife. WHY do you ill-treat your wife?”

“Why, her lad was ill, and he couldn’t work, for trade was bad; we were welly (*i.e.* well nigh) clemmed to death, and so th’ lad went to th’ Australia; and hoo sat over th’ fire when lad went; and hoo moped all day long; and so when hoo went on in that way I took to a gait of kicking her up a bit to make her LIVELY.”

‘ So the man took his departure, observing to my friend’s Butler as he went out, ‘ Eh, he’s a gradely felley, yon, he is for sure. I’ll go and sit under him when I can, that is, when I am in th’ mind.’

‘ “ Now,” said Gawaine, “ the next thing is what is to be done with the money? Give it to the poor of the parish; but how?” said he; “ well, give it to the Belton hospital; very well.”

‘ So the money was given to the hospital as from a *penitent*, at my suggestion; and then I insinuated to Gawaine, much to his annoyance, that the penitent would be supposed to represent himself!

‘ There was another notion the man took into his head, not a bad one: he imagined that Gawaine intended to put the two sovereigns into his own pocket, and nothing could persuade him to the contrary. In fact, he rather appreciated Gawaine the *more* on that account, and he never met Gawaine in the town without coming up to him to shake hands with him. “ Eh, you DID me GRADELY that time,” said he, “ you did, for sure;” and he used to get up hard questions on divinity for Gawaine to solve, much to his annoyance.

‘ He assured Gawaine that he now lived a much happier life than formerly; so I suggested to Gawaine, that we should go and pay his wife a visit and get *her* account of matters. So we went, and found a tall, thin, miserable looking woman, the picture of wretchedness.

‘ “ Well, my good woman,” said Gawaine, “ your husband tells me that his home is a far happier one now that he has taken my advice, and treats you as a woman ought to be treated. YOU find him BETTER now than you used, DON’T you?”

‘ The woman looked at him, and then said in a deliberate tone, “ WORSE!”

‘ Ah,’ observed Pen, ‘ “a dog, a woman, a walnut tree ; the more you beat them the better they be.” What a shame it is that all the proverbs should display such a want of gallantry towards the fair sex !’

‘ Proverbs,’ observed Algernon, sententiously, ‘ are, I fancy, truisms, put into a sort of epigrammatic form, hence their want of gallantry when applied to the fair sex generally. But do you really mean, Pen, that you would like a husband who *beat* you ?’

‘ Well, no, not exactly that ; but — you know what I mean.’

‘ I certainly don’t ; unless you mean, if your husband does not beat you, you will beat him ; and that I should think from what little I know of you far from improbable, and serve him right too, and no doubt. Well, we won’t argue the point.

‘ By-the-bye, when I was quartered in Somerset a great deal of amusement was caused by a remark said to have been made by a learned judge (I believe the whole thing was a mistake), that a husband had a legal right to beat his wife with a stick not thicker than his thumb. Fanny Harvey, wild as ever, got up a deputation of young ladies of her own age and waited upon the judge the next morning, requesting permission to measure his thumb, that they might know what to expect in the event of their changing their condition.’

‘ Well,’ said Pen, ‘ what did he say to them ?’

‘ Why, he told them that as he was much too old for any of them, he feared that he could be of little use to them.

‘ Fanny, the story goes on to say, told him that *she preferred old men*, and that the judge gave her a paternal salute!! I can’t vouch for the truth of the story ; but Fanny gets into a great taking at any little remark, “ that

elderly gentlemen ONLY need apply." Poor Fanny, she is a sort of cousin of ours!'

'Well,' said Pen, 'I am sure the judge must have been a nice old man!!'

'I believe so. He died last year. By-the-bye, an amusing thing happened. In the afternoon he took a walk out into the country, and went to church. The church happened to be crowded; one pew was empty — that immediately under the reading-desk; and into it the judge walked. Being very susceptible of cold, he put on his velvet skull-cap. Everything went on much as usual till just before the general thanksgiving, when the clergyman looked into the pew which had hitherto been set apart for *a particular purpose*, and seeing the velvet skull-cap and nothing more, fancied that it was a lady's bonnet, and accordingly read the prayer for the *returning of thanks*, &c. &c. Those of us who had noticed the *contretemps* were in fits. The old judge, who had not the slightest idea that he was being churched, bore the operation with the utmost composure. To behold his dignified aspect, and observe the devout way in which he followed the whole service with his prayer-book, without the least suspicion in the world that he himself played no inconsiderable part in the ceremonies — I thought that it would have been my *death*!'

Pen looked at first as if she hardly knew whether she ought to laugh or not; but seeing Lady Emily in fits, at once proceeded to follow suit.

'By-the-bye,' said Algernon, 'who was it who defined the essence of wit to be surprise?'

'Why is it that we are more tempted to laugh at church than anywhere else?' observed Lady Emily; 'surely because it is the place of all others where it jars on one's sense of decorum. I remember a few years ago,

when the Rector (who WOULD have his sheep in the churchyard on the Sunday, in spite of all Gerald could say) was preaching on the general confession, and first explained the extraordinary aptness of the simile: how readily men follow each other in what is wrong — just as one sheep follows its leader through a gap in the hedge. He observed that there was no animal with so little instinct as sheep — in other words, so little sense. A slight noise here made him look down. Staring him full in the face was the old ram, painfully demonstrating the truth of his remarks, looking as vacant and silly as any animal could. Now in a dog there is a certain amount of intellect in its face; here there was a total absence of everything of the sort. Happily the children did not see it, or they would have set me off. Now, Pen, it is your turn for a story.'

'About churches, Lady Emily? Well, some time ago we had a young friend staying with us, and we wanted to go to some church or other where the service was choral. Nothing would induce Aunt Tabitha to go. It was a Tractarian church, and she wouldn't go out, she said. Well, at last we DID manage to get her to the door. "No, she would find a place for herself." So she went up some dark staircase where no one could see her. We had places found us in the body of the church. We looked up: there was Aunt Tabitha in the front rank of the most obtrusive gallery; not a seat to be had on either side of her, the place being full of ladies, she was obliged to stand during the whole service. Behind her, in the passage down the gallery, there was a CROWD of ladies, so she was fast as in a vice. There she was, the admired of all beholders, forced against the front of the gallery, unable to move even. Didn't we catch it when we got home! You should have seen her look! Knowing the

expression of her face, as I did, it was quite clear that she had conscientious scruples as to the lawfulness of even witnessing such deeds without taking up her testimony against them. When at the creed the whole congregation turned to the East, a stifled groan escaped her. Altogether it was a *scene*, and no mistake. And now my story is done! and Major Conyers is in possession of the house.'

'By-the-bye,' said Algernon, 'what was I talking about before? Oh, about Gawaine. There was a man there who used to bother his life out; he set up for the Westerton of the place. The invalid Rector had not a chance with him, but in Gawaine he found a kindred spirit, and to it they went tooth and nail. There was on one Sunday a collection in the church, and Gawaine used to read the offertory, much to this man's (his name was Thompson) indignation. So Gawaine handed him the plate, and told him that he must collect; but I will endeavour to relate the circumstance in his own words, for he and I had struck up an acquaintance; he had made some money in cotton spinning:

"Well, Captain," said he, "Parson who works in the Rector's place sends for me before th' service, and (says he), 'Thou'lt collect,' says he. 'Nay, man,' says I, 'I'll have nowt doing with it.' 'Thou wilt,' says he. 'Nay, I *won't*,' says I. 'Thou wilt,' says he. So after service I up's with the plate, and goes to Jim Brierly, the clerk. Now, Jim and me had had words: we wasn't friends; and so I looks Jim in the face, and he looks me in the face. 'What dost thee want with me?' says he, in a loud whisper. 'Dost thee not know that Parson's sent me round to collect?' 'Thou wilt NOT collect from ME,' says he. 'Nay, but,' says I, 'Ill give thee the chance.' Says he, 'Ill give NOWT,' says he. So up I gets me

into the pulpit, for the parson had not come down; the young felley in the rails was reading. And I thrutches at th' parson with the plate, and he moves it aside, and points to th' congregation; so I thrutches at him again, and he shakes his head, and points to th' congregation again. So I gets me down from the pulpit, and I goes up to the rails, and I hands the plate to the curate; and I says to him, 'Clerk will give *nowt*, and parson will give *nowt*, and I 'll have *nowt* doing wi' it.' "

'I reminded him that, considering that that particular collection was for the service of the church, it was hardly to be expected that the parson or even the clerk should head it.

'That's a magnificent grey,' said Algernon; 'I believe that it is one of Lord Millington's; I know that he gave a huge price in London the other day for a horse. But who is that riding it? As thoroughly keen looking a man as ever I met. I fancy that it must be the head whip, in plain clothes; I am not sure, though. Dear me, I feel thoroughly done.'

'Indeed,' said Lady Emily, 'I hope you don't feel anything of your old wound.'

'Well, I am afraid that I shall have a touch of the old complaint. In fact, the place burns like fire. It has occasionally given me a twinge before, but never so badly as at present.'

CHAPTER VIII.

‘EAR me,’ said the Bishop, as the Colonel and he were sitting together after dinner, ‘dear me, what has become of Algernon?’

‘Well, he was rather done up, I fancy. Emily said something about a touch of his old complaint; that hurt he got at Balaclava.’

‘I am sorry to hear it,’ observed the Bishop; ‘I trust that it will not prove anything serious.’

‘I trust not,’ said the Colonel; but he looked rather apprehensive as he said so.

‘I fancy that it was a bad hurt; it would have proved serious to most people; but Algernon has such a wonderful constitution. Shall we draw round the fire?—place, I mean to say.’

‘With all my heart,’ said the Bishop. Nor was this a mere conventionalism; for on each side of the fireplace were two huge, well-cushioned, well-padded, crimson morocco easy chairs, of most seductive appearance, especially to two tall men, each of above six feet two, to whom a small chair is a thorough nuisance.

‘Ah!’ said the Colonel, settling himself comfortably in his large chair; ‘ah!’ said he, ‘this is pleasant after one’s day’s work;’ and he stooped down and pulled out a huge footstool from under his chair, kicking another that happened to be within his reach, to the Bishop; ‘try that,’ said he, ‘you will find it a great improvement;’ and the

Bishop also settled *himself* comfortably in his large chair, stretched out *his* legs also on to the footstool. Gawaine stood for a few minutes with his back to the fire.

‘Humph!’ said he, ‘I am much under six feet, I allow. Pity, Colonel, that you haven’t three large chairs.’

‘Ah! you young men,’ said the Colonel, ‘don’t want such things; when I was your age, I never sat in an easy chair.’

So Gawaine sat himself down, on one of the huge, massive mahogany dining-room chairs, and proceeded to make as easy a seat as he could, under the circumstances, by turning round two other chairs, so as to form as comfortable an arm-chair as circumstances would admit of.

‘Well,’ said the Colonel, ‘so Emily has heard from Lady Elizabeth, and she is coming here for a few days next week. Candidly, now, between ourselves, you know; she does not wear a rosary and thorough ecclesiastical dress, does she?’

The Bishop hesitated for a second, and the temptation was strong within him to dress his sister in all the eccentricities of mediævalism, and thus get a goodly rise out of his old friend; but he decided against doing so, merely saying that she dressed much as other people, only much more simply.

‘Well,’ said Gawaine, ‘I like to see people dressed to suit their profession; I am not fond of mufti. If we are to have these godly women of whom the Archbishop speaks, let them dress accordingly.’

‘Exactly so,’ observed the Bishop; ‘but the mediæval spirit has passed away, never to return, and the body must follow; no masquerading in antique dresses.’

‘Aye,’ said the Colonel, ‘I can’t stand a man making a guy of himself in church. As to preaching in his

surplice, if it has from time immemorial been customary, let him do so, only I had myself rather he didn't; but as to cope and chisable, I cannot away with it. You give every scoundrel in the country an excuse for attacking everything in the shape of religion, giving serious people reason to believe that you are hankering after the abominations of popery. Why cannot a person dress like other people? I can understand men living in the back alleys of huge towns wearing a cassock, and all that sort of thing, just to show that they are parsons, and not government spies. When there's a *use* for a thing, it's all very well; but I can't stand a man making a guy of himself without just cause. Faith, if I were Bishop, I would put *impediment* in his way. I remember a very decent young fellow who had a curacy in the neighbouring parish, holding most extraordinary views. He wore a hat like an umbrella, and a coat down to his ankles. He got into a tremendous row for refusing to bury a Dissenter, and came to me about it. I said you *must* do it, and therefore the less stir you make about it the better. Well, he came to dine with us that day, and so after dinner I said to him —

‘ “ Well, Richardson, how did you manage?”

‘ “ Well,” said he, “ I came out to meet the corpse, with my surplice unbuttoned, and flying in the wind, without hood or scarf, and before commencing the service I made them a short address, stating that it was solely from being compelled by the law of the land that I performed the ceremony, and that I did not go through the service as bound by the *Church*.”

‘ “ Ah, indeed!” said I. “ Well, you mean, I suppose, that under these circumstances, you, as a clergyman of the Church, wished to show no *respect* to the memory of the deceased.”

‘ “Yes, Colonel,” said he, “that was precisely my meaning.”

‘ “Well,” said I, “you either went too far, or not far enough. Now, only consider the matter. What an opportunity you have lost! Poor old Miss Lawrence! Man! you should have, as a perpetual protest, buried her without your *inexpressibles*! By Jove, sir! gravely think of the sensation it would have created if you walked out with your surplice unbuttoned, and in what the linendrapers call your cotton pants, with shoes and short black gaiters!”’*

The Bishop smiled. ‘You hit him hard there. But you were talking of my sister and monasteries. Monasteries were all very well in their day. Then they were absolutely necessary. Monasticism was a sort of necessary evil, as a check upon the awful tyranny of the feudal power. Take them as a class, the monks were about as good and about as bad as the generality of fellows of colleges. They were many of them not much better than they should be; but they were in every respect much better than the laity. As a body, the clergy, though lights in earthen vessels, are, and always have been, very far better than the laity.’

‘I agree with you,’ said the Colonel. ‘How are matters now? In the present day, for instance, see how (as a writer in the *Times* well expresses it) see how *thankfully* the prodigal is received if he have ten thousand a year, or be next heir to a peerage. Poor Perdita and her children may go to ruin; but the prodigal is welcomed with tears of thankfulness by the seven Belgravian matrons; and a man who may have degraded himself to the level of a brute beast, is thought to do honour by

* This anecdote is perfectly true.

wedding some pure and innocent young girl, to whom a marriage with some young man of character, with moderate means, and good prospects of rising at the bar, or in the profession of letters, would be judged to be an evident step towards perdition. A country curate!!!'

'When with a corrupt Court and a corrupt people the whole land was demoralised, if the clergy were different then from what they are now, we know that everybody else was a very great deal worse. So it always has been; and so, doubtless, it always will be. I *may* be wrong, and I dare say I *am*,' continued the good Bishop, 'but my humble opinion is, that in the middle ages those monasteries were real blessings. What would have then become of the *people* if there had not been a power sufficient to wither the mailed arm of the Norman Baron? A great deal of rubbish is talked about youthful nuns pining in solitude, and gnawing their chains. I don't believe a word of it. Of course there have been exceptions; but what was to become in those days of the tender orphan daughters, the destitute widow, when feudalism winged its circling flight, sailing onwards on the wings of the storm blast, and desolating where it passed? Then Monachism brooded over the spot, and soon the barren and war-trampled place blossomed like the rose. The marshy land was drained, the bleak and barren hills became fair woods, sheltering the valleys below. In short, whatever is valuable in art, whatever is beautiful,—science itself, I may say,—we owe to the monasteries. Look at our buildings: every one of those we owe to the monasteries. Do you doubt it? First look at the Houses of Parliament, and then look at York Minster or Lincoln; or look at Henry VII.'s chapel over the way! I believe that whatever was noble, whatever was excellent, holy, and self-sacrificing, had there its abiding place, and that

it was there alone that men had that highest privilege of all granted to them, of serving Him as ministering spirits, waiting with angelic care upon God's cherished ones.'

'Well, but,' said Colonel Conyers, 'would you have the land again full of monasteries?'

'No, no more than I would have it full of feudal castles. I would no more have the shaven head, sandled feet, and girdle of rope, than I would have the shirt of mail, the flat-topped helmet, the heavy Norman sword, and ponderous war-horse. No! the knight-errant was a most useful personage in his day, and doubtless very picturesque; good in his generation, but very inferior to Inspector Brown, or even Policeman X. Good and holy men built magnificent churches, trusting that in them the lamp of prayer which they had kindled might ever burn brightly,—that through their means there might ever be a company of worshippers, ever praising God, and saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." And if men do not build in precisely the same way nowadays, it is because times are changed. It does not follow that faith has grown cold upon the earth. Churches are now built and endowed as freely as ever, but after a different manner, and more suited to the exigencies of the age. No doubt the endowments nowadays appear small, nay, utterly insufficient; but perhaps in olden days they were not very much more. The increased value of land, both owing to the improvement of agriculture, and more than all, perhaps, to manufactures, and its immensely increased value as building ground, has made all the difference in the world. The times are changed. By-the-bye, you endow the new church at Billington: what do you intend to give?'

'Three hundred a year. I have a small farm there of

which the rental is about that sum on an average. A man must not expect to make money in holy orders. If he can get a bare maintenance according to his position (and how few do so!) he may think himself very fortunate. To many men it must be trying,—men struggling with a family for a maintenance, unable to make both ends meet, and seeing their neighbours, men in no way superior to themselves in family and education, making their 10,000*l.* or their 20,000*l.* a year. The labourer is worthy of his hire; but nowadays he must take what he can get. In an out-of-the-way district, with a large population, I have looked upon it as an advantage to have two or three curates living together: two or three can live more cheaply than one, and they would work better, feeling less lonely.'

'Ah,' said the Colonel, 'I have often wondered how a poor fellow, one of refined tastes and habits, can manage in an out-of-the-way place. Supposing a man has plenty to do, even then there is a sort of stagnation of mind. "Like follows after like." A man should be only judged by his peers. Public opinion has great hold upon people, but it must be the opinion of their own set. Aye,' continued the Colonel, 'look at mankind in general. See "*Justum ac tenacem propositi virum*." He troubles his head very little about the opinion of *ignobile vulgus*. *Ignobile vulgus*, who has a weakness for picking and stealing, cares very little for the patrician, like the little pickpocket the other day at the reformatory, who was asked by the chaplain whom he supposed to be the greatest man in the world? he at once replied, "*Mr. Norton, the beak!*" To such a one, what is the value of the opinion of the world at large compared with being considered "a downy cove" by his mates? Then think of the influence of surrounding objects,—force of habit. Now, speaking of force

of habit, to go not further than one of my own grooms : the other day I had sent him with a horse somewhere or other, and he returned on the Sunday morning, having ridden all night. He fell asleep during the afternoon in church, and, supposing himself still on his journey, shouted out " Gate ! " half a dozen times before they could awake him. The congregation, as you may suppose, was *electrified !* *

‘ Well,’ said the Bishop, ‘ I understand your simile, but scarcely your argument. What do you mean by “ like follows like ? ” Like would follow like if he could, but if he cannot he cannot. Suppose we join the ladies.’

* The above really happened in Lancashire.

CHAPTER IX.

 HERE are two other characters, one of whom will have a very considerable influence in determining the fate of more than one of the other characters described in this veracious history, and they live somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Regent's Park.

A hot summer's afternoon, and two ladies sitting in an elegantly-furnished drawing-room; one lady answers to the name of Blunt, the other to that of Gumps.

Mrs. Blunt, a tall, delicate-looking person, very lady-like, dressed in a light muslin dress, wearing her fair hair, no longer *slightly* silvered (but more from ill-health than age), was sitting in a large easy chair, twisting some fancy-coloured worsteds with knitting-needles. What she was doing I know not, but she called it *work*. She kept twisting the worsteds most diligently, but it was very evident that her thoughts were far away.

The room was an elegant room enough; a great deal of luxury, but an absence of comfort. Everything was covered: occasional tables covered with antimacassars; an elegant screen of plate-glass in a gilt Louis XIV. frame, also covered with an antimacassar; all the chairs antimacassared. In short, it gave you the idea of a grand drying day after the fishing-boats had come in. The very piano wore a pair of leather inexpressibles. The instru-

ment was Pen's; and though a brilliant, she was a vile performer, missing half her notes.

Opposite to the fireplace was a magnificent portrait of Pen, by the prince of portrait-painters. The table was covered with all the new works, tolerably political, tolerably scientific, with a touch of the fine arts. The windows were wide open, but the Venetian blinds were down, and gave a sort of apparent coolness to the room, by shutting out the glare of the summer's sun.

But how shall we describe Miss Gumps? A very slight lady, no longer young, with a somewhat washed-out complexion, and, so far as could be judged from the expression of her face (for she sat with her back to the light, and, ever regardless of the comfort of others, made a point of always having the blinds down).

She was of a most cantankerous disposition; always dressed in black silk. She had also light hair, but very little was to be seen of it, for she gloried in having it screwed up into the tightest of curls. She also wore a cap with some sort of gilt flowers, rather like little bells. I fancy they must have been Californian lilies of the valley, which emblems of humility some young friend in bitter irony had sent her, and which, having accepted in the most perfect good faith, she always made a point of wearing.

Her cap (or whatever it was) was black, not inappropriate, as she was ever passing judgment upon her neighbours.

'Dear me,' said Mrs. Blunt, 'Pen appears to be enjoying herself very much. Lady Emily seems to have been very kind to her.'

'And Major Conyers, too,' snarled Miss Gumps. 'I only hope it may turn out well; but I have my doubts, sister.'

'Oh, what do you mean, Miss Gumps?'

‘What do I *mean*? — plain enough. Men are all alike. Of course he’ll marry her for her money; and if he doesn’t, the child may break her heart for him. Mind, I warned you, sister. Don’t blame me. Never say you were not warned, when your gray hairs go down in sorrow to the grave.’

‘My daughter,’ said Mrs. Blunt, ‘must take her chance like other people. I am, I suppose, as foolish as most mothers; but I am weak enough to think that, to any one whom Pen, with her good sense, would be likely to admire, her fortune would prove one of her least attractions. We have not the slightest *reason* to suppose that she cares in the least for him, or he for her; and I do trust that when Pen returns you will put no such thoughts into her head. By all accounts, Major Conyers is everything that a mother could wish for a daughter, supposing them to be attached to each other. Of course her large fortune would prove a very great attraction to many young men; but I fancy that, as Major Conyers succeeded to his aunt’s property, money can be no object to him. And if it were, I do not see that a man who decides on making a *really* prudent marriage is likely to be less sincerely attached to any woman, than a man who hurries into marriage from *love*, as it is called, and selfishly involves some young girl in perpetually narrow circumstances, because he chooses to marry on insufficient means for the sake of gratifying his own passion, or perhaps fancy. Now,’ said Mrs. Blunt, who, though generally the gentlest of women, had a spirit of her own at times, ‘Now, Miss Gumps, I beg that no allusion may ever be made to this subject in my daughter’s hearing.’

‘Very well, sister,’ said Miss Gumps, somewhat taken aback (your professed grumblers generally are, when a supposed meek individual turns Turk, and is evidently in

earnest). ‘Very well, sister; don’t blame me. “*Liberavi animam meam!*” as my poor father the magistrate used to say,—I have delivered my own soul. Don’t say you have not been warned.’

How on earth had they found it out! I really don’t know. Pen had either talked a great deal about Algeron in her letters, or she had omitted to do so, one or the other, each of them equally damnifying; but found her out they had.

‘Well, but, sister, what fortune has Major Conyers?’

‘I really don’t know; but I have heard that it is about 3000*l.* a year, and a splendid old house.’

‘I don’t believe anything of the sort,’ said Miss Gumps snappishly. ‘Where was he to get it from? I don’t believe it.’

‘Well,’ said Mrs. Blunt, ‘perhaps it does not much matter?’

‘Not much matter? They shall not have one penny of my fortune; and 60,000*l.* is not to be despised. She shall be no heir of mine. Well, we shall hear all from poor Susan’s husband when he comes here, for I have written to ask him.’

Mrs. Blunt looked at her with amazement.

‘*Indeed,*’ said she; ‘and to *my* house without my knowledge,’ she was about to say, but she held her peace. Such an *absurd* idea crossed her mind! ‘Well, well, Miss Gumps, remember I wash my hands of the matter. He is your guest, and not mine. “*Liberavi animam meam.*” Now, mark me! I’ll not have Pen’s name brought into the matter.’

Miss Gumps coloured up with indignation. The idea had never entered into her head; and poor Susan was dead, too, and her husband a widower. Good gracious! How imprudent! What would people say? *Surely* they

would say that he was her *sister's* beau, not hers! Widows generally married again! and so she went on ruminating. *Her* guest, indeed! Such a thing had never been thought of, and her sister would insist on her going into dinner with this cousin. She take his arm! She would *die* first. Well, what *was* she to do? What had *induced* her to invite him? and her sister-in-law, too, to turn round upon her, when she ought to have laid herself meekly down, and been trodden under foot! Alas! there are many in this good world of ours who are expected to give way in everything; to do *door-mat* to boots and shoes of every size, shape, and dimension, and if the door-mat gets tired of its apparent vocation, rolls itself up, porcupine fashion; nay, more, proceeds, on being attacked as usual, to shoot its quills out in every direction at its adversaries, as the porcupine of our ancestors *gloried* in doing, let but one person be wounded, and all join in self-defence. Aye, such a hal-labuloo as never was known. The victim must at once be attacked,—aye, *worried*,—like a strange dog in a country town; and unless there be somewhat of the bull in him he is soon torn in pieces, or is taught to walk warily for the future. At present, however, Miss Gumps felt discomfited. Well, what was to be done? Of course, was he not almost a relation? She had hitherto managed her own property, and yet life was very uncertain. She wanted a trustee, and was it not as well to take advantage of her relatives being in London? She had not mentioned it to her sister certainly, but what of that? Her sister was sick; was she not attending upon her, and in some sort of way her chaperon? Well, but to have it almost insinuated that she was angling for a *husband*! she knew what she meant, though she did look so demure. She would not stand it; but what was she to do?

Matrimony had never of late years entered her head. She was aware that, as a young girl even, she had never been handsome. She was clever, certainly; but it must be confessed that she had chiefly displayed it in saying insulting things, to gentlemen especially, when she met them in society; and she always, by some extraordinary talent or other, managed to hit upon those subjects calculated to give the greatest possible annoyance. Well, she was not handsome, certainly; but she flattered herself that she was one of those women who improve in appearance as they grow older. Her teeth were excellent, white, and tolerably regular; but strong as those of a hyena, and wolfish looking. Her eyes were bright, certainly; but they had a sort of green tint,—in fact, a sort of greenish grey,—very small in comparison with the rest of her features, set rather far apart, and they matched well with the teeth. There was a cruel look about them, which was also reciprocated by the teeth. The eyes were not altogether unlike those of a pig, both in colour and in expression; and there is perhaps no eye that expresses such savage determination as that of an old sow when thoroughly roused.

So Miss Gumps sat still, meditating on things in general. She usually sat up, bolt upright,—painfully so,—and when any one entered the room who slightly stooped it was then alarming to see her. A beautifully straight back,—nay, it was, if anything, *concave*; and an ornithologist would have observed with interest the strange resemblance which it bore to the hollow with which nature has beneficently provided the young cuckoo, by means of which it ousts its more legitimate brethren out of their family mansion. And so she sat in deep thought.

She had once had an admirer; he was certainly *fond* of her. True, he was rather meek, and of a melancholy

disposition, and was seldom seen to smile. When such an unusual occurrence took place, it was noticed to be attributable to some playful conduct of Miss Tabitha, when she had spiflicated the whole party of eligibles present, sending them all to the rightabout, horse, foot, and dragoons! People had certainly said that he was not quite right, and she had then agreed with them (he had since married a maid-servant); but now she thought that he was not so bad as she made him out then to be. As to being an old maid, that was nothing either here or there. She did not approve of early marriages; no, not she! People nowadays married so young that they had grandchildren before they well knew what they were about, which grandchildren they utterly spoil. Was it not plain proof positive that they were too young to be trusted with children? Grandchildren forsooth! Commend her to grandchildren. Well, if she married now! Well, nature was certainly against her. She was rather old for a family, yet hers would be well brought up. Well, she supposed that such things could not be. What was that old fool opposite crying about? She would tell her her mind; perhaps, though, she had better let her alone. She couldn't think what had come over her of late.

There was a calm dignity about Mrs. Blunt there was no opposing. She appeared so thoroughly aware of the influence her position gave her: she was not a woman to be ordered about, as Miss Gumps had found out to her cost.

Far different were the thoughts of the other sister, as she reclined in her large and comfortable easy chair, her feet on a small footstool, her head resting on the back of the chair, her eyes half closed, and her eyelashes wet with tears, as she thought of her darling child; wondered

whether there was any truth in Miss Gumps's notion of an attachment; wondered whether Algernon was really and truly attached to her daughter; if so, her fortune would smoothe away difficulties; or had her warm-hearted and impulsive daughter irrevocably given her heart to one who was indifferent to its possession, or perhaps could not return her love, having no heart to give in exchange—probably attached to some one else. Fifteen years older, too! she had rather it had been ten; but it was a matter of little consequence: her own life, too, so uncertain; but she was prepared to go; but, oh! that she might see her dear child settled in life first! She would fain have kept her always by her; but, ever unselfish, she had *insisted* upon her leaving home. She had not told her how ill she believed herself to be, and yet *she* far from knew in how dangerous a state she was. Miss Gumps had quite misunderstood her case; told her plainly that there was nothing the matter with her; said it was disgraceful, and sharply desired her to *make an effort*, which she proceeded to do, and gave Miss Gumps such a rating as perfectly astounded her, and thoroughly silenced her for the time. She collected herself, however, and rose to dress for dinner, followed by Miss Gumps. As they were going upstairs she was startled by a sharp ring at the bell, followed by a thundering knock at the door. She turned round. A tallish gentleman was standing in the hall, and a cabman was bringing in a small portmanteau.

She turned to her maid, who said that Miss Gumps had ordered a room to be got ready for a gentleman who was coming for a few days, whilst he had some important business to transact in London.

Much annoyed she went to her room, made some slight alteration in her dress, and then took up a book, read a little, and yet was in time to catch Miss Gumps coming out

of her room in a low dress, a thing she had not worn for ten years.

In an osteological point of view, the change might have been looked upon as eminently successful, but in no other respect. Her hair was dressed *à la Chinois*, which made her look positively startling: usually thin as a whipping-post, to-day she adopted an enormous amount of crinoline.

Mrs. Blunt gave her a few minutes' law, and then, entering the drawing-room, saw an elderly, rather distinguished-looking man, with very white hair. He was dressed in a bright blue dress coat with gilt buttons and white facings—the club coat of the Punjaub scarifiers,—appended to which hung, by a red ribbon, some order or other, a buff waistcoat, with the regimental button, dark blue inexpressibles, white silk stockings, beautifully fitting patent leather dress shoes, with small diamond shoe-buckles,—this, with the addition of a white tie, without shirt collars, most beautifully tied, made up his costume.

Miss Gumps was so busy talking to him about something or other, that they neither observed Mrs. Blunt's entrance. Presently she was aware of her neglect; for she said to her companion, in a low voice, 'Oh, Captain King! I shud have introduced you to my sister before.'

'And so you saw the man, did you, for me, and made him pay up? Well, I am glad of it. I was never so *tret* in all my life before.'

Dinner was announced; and Miss Tabitha, to avoid taking his arm, with a slight apology rushed to the sofa for her handkerchief.

Captain King allowed the two ladies to precede him, and brought up the rear.

'Well, I never thought of *that*,' said Miss Gumps.

During the dinner Captain King was most agreeable. Mrs. Blunt could not help being most pleased with him. Full of anecdote, delightfully sarcastic, but polished as cynical.

After dinner Pen's mother sat with her eyes apparently closed and fast asleep, but really enjoying the scene immensely. Miss Gumps sat at a small round table, Captain King on her right hand, about half a yard from her.

'And so, Captain King, you live about two or three miles from Lady Emily. What sort of a woman is she? I suppose they are very *high* people.'

'Very leading people they are, certainly. She is very charming and agreeable; he is very worthy. By-the-bye, I saw your charming niece: I should have known her anywhere, my dear cousin, from the extraordinary family likeness.'

'Really, Captain King,' *cooed* Miss Gumps, 'you military gentlemen are such flatterers.'

'How can you be so absurd, my dear cousin! Has not dear Pen the same eyes and beautiful teeth—the same exquisite complexion? Hers may perhaps be less *mellowed*. My poor dear Susan (who I trust now is an angel) used frequently to speak of you. She often used to say, I wish you knew my cousin Tabitha. Poor thing! I miss her even more than I expected. Once I had a bright face ever watching for my return, and now my home is *desolate*,' said he in a tone of anguish, involuntarily moving his chair till it nearly touched Miss Gumps, who, painfully alive to the indecency of such a proceeding, moved hers about one foot further off.

'You, my dear cousin, valued and respected as you must be,'—here she slightly winced—'can have no idea of the aching void left in the heart of a desolate widower.'

Here he moved his chair closer to Miss Gumps's, and she, to avoid temptation, moved hers a little further on.

‘I am thankful,’ he said, ‘to be spared, in addition to this heavy bereavement, any pecuniary anxieties; my income is far, very far larger than I can possibly spend, and money to me is no object. If it had only been our fate to have met earlier in life! but that cannot now be helped. Yet men marry the second time, not from wayward passion’—here he grinned like an ogre—‘but for companionship,—that highest style of friendship in which two existences, formerly diverse, now become blended together, and, all points of difference vanishing, become merged in one incorporate, one blessed existence.’

And he moved his chair close to hers,—she seeking safety in flight.

Pen’s mother, though infinitely amused, could not help dropping asleep; and after a time waking, and cautiously unclosing her eyes, found that Captain King, having hunted his neighbour round the table till her chair could go no farther, had made a dash *in medias res*, and placed his arm round her waist.

‘O, Captain King! DON’T, Captain King! I’ll CALL OUT, Captain King! DON’T—let me alone, Captain King. I never heard of such a thing. Fie for shame, sir! What *will* you do next? Well, to be sure,’ said she, settling her cap, which had fallen off in the contest. ‘I am very glad, for your sake, that my sister did not see it. No, I won’t say yes, sir,—that’s flat. I cuddn’t. Have you no respect for one’s feelings, sir? You are a regular Lothario, sir. You are a perfect Don Juan!’

‘Then you won’t say no, and break my heart?’

‘That is another matter, sir.’

Here the gallant Captain made another and more effectual dash at her.

‘You will wake your sister,’ said he; and he gravely saluted her.

And Miss Gumps, stealing a quiet look at her sister to be certain that she was asleep, and seeing her with her eyes shut, then with her handkerchief up to her eyes walked out of the room.

‘ Well, to be sure ! to think that I should be such a fool ! Oh, dear ! it is wrong—it is quite indecent to hunt a woman round a table in that way. And so he has far more money than he can spend ? Well, I will take care to have my money settled upon myself, for I hear that he is *rather* careful. Only to think of it ! and I thought he would have just gone down upon his knees, and at most would have kissed my hand. Well, we are but frail creatures. Eh ! he’s a grand creature—he’ll be about sixty, I am thinking. Ah, well ! if he isn’t steady now he never will be.’ And so saying she wiped her eyes and returned to the drawing-room.

Mrs. Blunt was far too shrewd to know anything about the matter. Captain King she treated with the most distant politeness, making tender inquiries about his late wife,—what was the exact degree of relationship between her and Miss Gumps,—a sort of third cousin. She had heard, she said, that Miss Gumps had had some legal matters of importance to arrange ; believed that her sister-in-law had great reason to thank Captain King for his kind assistance ; hoped that matters were going on satisfactorily.

Obtrusively blind to any idea that tenderer feelings could possibly exist between the parties, any such notion would, of course, be too absurd ever to occur to her mind ; and so matters remained for a few days,—Miss Gumps skipping about the house as if she were sweet seventeen, and carolling forth many a plaintive ditty in a high falsetto—a little nasal—and reminding her audience of a certain sort of mechanical operation termed *setting a saw*.

‘Humph!’ said Captain King to himself, ‘how painfully fond those two women ARE of one another! That charming Mrs. Blunt would eat her sister gladly without salt; and to think of Tab sending me down to Doctors’ Commons to look at her father’s and brother’s will, under the pretext of consulting me relative to some investment. I believe the whole idea of the investment is a fudge from beginning to end.’

In this view of the case he was mistaken. Miss Gumps had heard of an investment which promised seven per cent.; and though she did not spend half her income, she was quite alive to the necessity of increasing it at least one-half.

Her niece had spoken of Captain King’s loss, and Algernon’s narrow escape. She had met him in London, and he had claimed her acquaintance; so she insisted on his paying her sister a visit, who would be glad to see one who had just left her niece. It quite suited Captain King to accept her invitation, and he accordingly did so.

Not feeling over comfortable in his new quarters, he strolled off after breakfast, and was generally detained by important business till dinner time. It so happened that he found himself opposite to a shop full of all sorts of curiosities. ‘Well,’ thought he, ‘those inlaid Indian weapons of mine are DOWN in the market. I was quite right to bring them to town. Millington (who appeared on all occasions to be looked upon as his market-town) won’t buy at any price. Ancient armour is now his hobby since he restored that old place of his.’ So in he walked.

‘Pray, Mr. Jervois, what have you in the way of antiquities? have you any inlaid Indian weapons to dispose of?’

‘Well, sir, I have not,’ said a very shrewd-looking, but

very bland, middle-aged, very gentlemanly-looking personage. 'Those of the highest class are not easy to meet with at present, and I should be very glad to hear of some.'

'Indeed,' said Captain King; 'so they are up in the market. Pray, what things are at present DOWN in the market?'

'Well,—do you care about oak cabinets? I have some glorious things of the Cinque Cento period.'

So they went into a huge warehouse, full of every sort of carving in wood and ivory, — the rarest china.

'Old pictures I have none,' said the elderly gentleman; 'I do not understand them. Now this,' said he, 'is unique,' lifting up a glass case, and taking from thence a brown, rusty-looking thing, not unlike a huge cocoa-nut with the lower half cut off. 'That,' said he, 'is the battle-helmet supposed to have been worn by both Saxons and Normans. It was dug up in the neighbourhood of Hastings. There, you see, is what was called the nasal, or nose-piece. Now, that is very curious; probably no such helmet exists in the world.'

'That's the thing for Millington,' thought Captain King; and he asked the price.

'Well,' said Mr. Jervois, 'I must have 100*l.* for it.'

'Indeed,' said Captain King, turning it over and over. 'Most interesting!'

He had supposed the price would have been about 5*l.*, and had mentally sold it for 10*l.*, but was far too old a man of the world to commit himself.

'Pray,' said he, 'what is the value of that long sword with cup-hilt or bowl-hilt, or whatever you call it?'

'You were quite right, *bowl-hilt* is the term. Well, you observe that the perforated work of the bowl is very coarse; the blade is fine, certainly. It is not Italian, but

an English copy, and not by a first-rate man either. Under these circumstances I can say fifty shillings. Very cheap.'

'Very,' said Captain King; 'I'll have it;' and at once mentally resold it to Millington for 5*l*.

'I could not have taken 10*l*. for it three years ago, but the Manchester Exhibition has stirred up everybody so thoroughly that the market is regularly glutted. Moreover, four or five collections have lately been broken up. The Bernal collection, for instance. Now, I can let you have a few of those long rapiers of Philip and Mary dirt cheap. Just come down into the armoury.'

And accordingly he led the way down a flight of stairs into a most picturesque old hall, or rather crypt, filled with the finest suits of old armour. The room would have gladdened the heart of Cattermole, with its low groined roof, its double line of heavy Norman pillars. In one corner of the crypt were arranged suits of chain armour, — some eight or ten, — shown off upon figures of basket-work, — some the finest ring mail, others bars of steel linked together.

'Ah!' said Captain King, 'I have seen something very like this in INDIA!'

Beyond these figures stood in plate armour, bright as buff-leather and rottenstone could make them, wearing the salade, and the long-toed sollerets, resting their gauntleted hands upon heavy cross-handled swords, with pointed, double-edged blades, and large flat pommels; then a beautiful page's suit, damascened with gold, holding in the hand a tiny mace. The suit would have fitted a child of ten years old. Further on, resting against a stone table, were some ten or twelve knights' swords of Henry VIII.'s reign, not unlike the *Trovatore* style on the songs of the present day; on the table itself

lay some very curious battle-helmets, considerably larger than milk-tins, with chains attached to them, lest they should be knocked off in the *mêlée*. Then another group — one figure on horseback, in superb armour, embossed all over; round it five or six figures, in glorious suits, were standing as it were, apparently attending upon the mounted cavalier.

Captain King thought they would suit him exactly, and inquired the price.

‘Well,’ said the elderly gentleman with the bland demeanour, ‘that mounted figure is royal armour,—you will observe the royal arms upon it; it is almost unique. There is a suit in the Tower, perhaps as fine, mounted in a recess in the Horse Armoury, and which belonged to Henry VIII.; but it is plainer than this. For this suit I could say 200*l*.’

Captain King’s face lengthened considerably.

‘For that puffed and slashed suit next to it, I could say 100*l*. For those three, 200*l*. apiece. The Emperor of Russia has almost bid me the money. Those cross-bows are very fine, but they are unmarketable—take up too much room in a hall. That very fine one, say five guineas. Those eight long rapiers, two guineas apiece.’

‘I’ll take them,’ said Captain King. ‘How do you manage to pick them up?’

‘Well, I have agents in all the great towns, who bring up everything at once. Ah, now! these are very fine, rather later, though—Puritan swords,—some belonged to the old Ironsides. These will be four guineas apiece. Dissenting opinions are all the rage now. A large trade amongst the Nonconformists. Those are doctrines that pay nowadays. I sold twenty to Sir Hincledon Twist the other day. “Sir,” he said to me, “there always have been Dissenters, and there always will be.” “Indeed,”

said I, "and yet I could name the first." "Oh, the deuce!" said he. "Exactly so," said I; "you have hit it." Well, he looked puzzled for a bit, and then he laughed. "You're a bigot," said he, "and I suppose will remain so till the end of the chapter."

So Captain King looked round him. Against the walls were arranged arquebusses, petronels, two-handed swords, rapiers, long pikes; here and there a number of daggers, some with blades perforated like the most beautiful lace-work; battle-axes of every shape, sort, and description; maces, snap-haunces, and I know not what.

So the gallant Captain invested some 20*l.*, got a handsome offer for his Indian armour and inlaid weapons, and, calling a cab, set off home with his trophies.

Suddenly the horse began to jib frightfully. The cabman plied his whip vigorously without effect, till the horse found it necessary to make a demonstration; putting his head down like a donkey, he lashed out furiously with his heels, making a dreadful clanging of weapons. Cabby sprung to his head, shouted out to Policeman X, who applied the whip pretty much as he would have used his staff. Horse tries another dodge, rushes wildly across the street, — cabman hanging on well in front, Policeman X laying on well behind. Horse makes a short tack back again, cabby again doing rudder. Little boys make facetious remarks; elderly ladies take refuge in shops. Horse, finding himself in front of a Club, indulges in a little more kicking, with his head well down. Captain King takes out his watch, wishes he had the horse at Billington. Horse tries rearing, which proves a failure; runs away for twenty yards, stops in front of a Club, begins again. Immense excitement amongst the old fogies. Little boys grow facetious, advise Captain King to carry his kettle and walk, also advises cabby to sell his horse to

an old lady for a Saturday's airing. Horse turns over a new leaf; goes splendidly for a couple of streets, then begins again worse than ever. Captain King denounces cabman, who insists upon being paid by the hour; gets into another cab, and so home to dinner, where we leave him for the present.

CHAPTER X.



O Gawaine Conyers had a living given to him by his friend and patron the Bishop, and he went over to look at it, where he met the churchwarden, who pressed much to take a bed at his house.

‘And so you are Major Conyers’s cousin? You are, for sure? And how is he to-day? I hear he’s mortal bad.’

‘Indeed?’ said Gawaine.

‘Yes,’ continued the farmer; ‘he was taken bad three weeks ago; and a short time afterwards the Bishop came here, and I told him, and he went on to the Abbey, he did.’

‘Indeed?’ said Gawaine. ‘Do you mean to say that he is really *dangerously* ill?’

‘I do,’ said the farmer.

‘How far is it? Not three miles, I think?’

‘Nothing like it,’ said the farmer.

So off he went.

‘I shall be there by eight,’ said he; and he, accompanied by the farmer, who offered to show him the way, set off.

On they went through the meadows, till they came to the weir, where the farmer first met Algernon.

‘Well,’ said the farmer, ‘he was a nice gentleman, he was. It was just here where I seed him first: he was dressed something like a merry Andrew, and I was just going to put him into the river.’

‘ Very well you *didn’t* attempt it,’ observed Gawaine ;
‘ he certainly would have put you in.’

‘ Perhaps he would — perhaps he would,’ observed the farmer. ‘ Poor chap ! he ain’t fit to put a child in now,’ said he. ‘ More ’s the pity. They say he’s bad, very bad, for sure !’

Gawaine said nothing, for he was much attached to Algernon. So they walked up the old avenue in silence, through the magnificent old gate tower, one of the finest remaining portions of the old castle, and, entering in at one of the side portals, met Tibbits, who said that he supposed that Mr. Gawaine had come to see Major Algernon ; and walking through the small armoury, as it was called, found themselves on the grand staircase,— and a magnificent staircase it was,— of the blackest oak ; here and there were pillars supporting the balustrade ; on each pillar a huge cat bearing a shield, with the Conyers arms.

Tibbits quietly opened a door, and Gawaine went in very softly. At first he could see nothing in the darkened room. It had once been the oratory, it was supposed (at all events it went by that name). It had been a portion of the old castle ; the ceiling was of stone beautifully carved, and the only light in the room was from a stone window, of the flamboyant style of architecture ; the window was full of the most magnificent stained glass ; the subject was scriptural, but the dresses of figures dated from about the time of Edward IV., with the long-toed shoes and furred mantle. And the evening sun shone through the deeply-coloured glass, tinting with varied colours all things on which its light fell. At first everything looked indistinct. At length he discovered Algernon lying upon a couch. Round him were kneeling the Bishop, Lady Emily, and Pen. The words of the prayer, as they caught his ear, gave him a shock. It had

been taken from the prayer for the visitation of the sick; and he at once recognised the prayer, of which the heading is, 'For a sick person, when there appeareth small hope of recovery.' The words which caught his ears as he entered the room were these: 'We know, O Lord, that there is no word impossible with Thee, and that if Thou wilt Thou canst even yet raise him up, and grant him a longer continuance amongst us. Yet, forasmuch as in all appearance the time of dissolution draweth nigh, so fit and prepare him, we beseech Thee, against the hour of death, that after his departure hence, in peace and in Thy favour, his soul may be received into Thine everlasting kingdom.'

Gawaine felt as if some one had struck him a heavy blow. He was much attached to Algernon, and at the conclusion of the prayer he went up to his bedside, and took him by the hand: it felt dry and burning. He turned his eyes towards Gawaine, but could not speak. Alas! the head thrown far back, the struggle for breath that appeared like a gasp, the deep and deadly-looking hollows round the eyes, the prominent eyeballs looking hot and glistening, the nose with its sharp and famished look, the nostrils unnaturally expanded, and the livid colour of the face, told too truly of approaching dissolution. He pressed Gawaine's hand.

'My time is come,' he faintly said. 'I am, I trust, prepared to go. Thankful am I that I have had these last few years of life spared me. No assurance; but firm, firm faith. I am reconciled to either.'

A change came over his features; he gave a quiet sigh, and all was still.

'Our dear brother,' said the Bishop solemnly, 'has fallen asleep!'

Gawaine silently left the room, and set off on his journey homewards. The soft, warm wind, the smell of the newly-made hay, seemed to jar sadly on his present feel-

ings. It appeared wonderful that Algernon, who had passed safely through that disastrous Russian campaign, should now have died so unexpectedly. In fact, he had heard nothing of his illness. Here was a man, calculated to do much good in the world — a good, holy, God-fearing man — suddenly removed. ‘The righteous is removed from the evil to come,’ murmured he, as he went on. From the evil to come. The evil to come. What evil? Surely if any family had a prospect of having peace in their days it was the Conyers family.

The ways of Providence, thought he, are most mysterious; and he sat himself down on the weir head of the Nun’s Pool. Algernon, too,—and they had been such friends, and he had promised himself so much pleasure in his society,—in fact, in the society of the whole family. Lady Emily had been ever a great favourite of his; and the old Colonel, too, he had got on very well with him of late, now that he had left off teasing him about the Conyers falchion. He had now a new parish. His host appeared a most excellent man; one who had known affliction. And that horrible Robinson, whom he detested, and who was such a constant torment to him,—he was leaving him behind. And glad he was to do so; not that he did not carry matters with a high head, so far as friend Robinson was concerned; but it was a most unpleasant thing to be forced to do so. Robinson had, it is true, humbled himself: having the fear of the spiritual courts before his eyes, he had certainly recanted. So far all was right. But still these continued bickerings were a great nuisance to him, and fidgeted him incessantly. Robinson was one of those thick-headed men occasionally met with, whose strength lies, like that of the negro, in the intense thickness of their skulls,—one of those men whom it is impossible to put down, except through their apprehensions. A retort, keen and pointed, polished as the blade of a lancet, and

as cutting, had as much effect on him as the material lancet would have upon the scales of an alligator. In short, nothing lighter than a cannon ball would have the least effect upon him. He was well rid of the man. Altogether it was a most pleasing change, to say nothing of the addition of a hundred or two a year to his income.

His wife would delight in the change, for she had been most anxious for it; and when she wished for anything very much she generally managed to get it. In short, as is the case with very little women, she bullied Gawaine dreadfully. Now, I must not for a moment be supposed to mean that she scolded him incessantly from morning to night. Quite another thing. It was a mixture of petting and tormenting. Did she want a letter written to facilitate any arrangement she had in view, did Gawaine wish to shirk it, and did he betake himself to the fastnesses of his study, there was a graceful, bright-looking figure, with eyes bright as a bird's: his book was noiselessly removed, a blotting-pad placed before him, a sheet of note-paper, a pen inserted between his unwilling fingers, an envelope ready stamped, both her tiny hands on his shoulders, and the stereotyped phrase, 'Now, Gawaine, BE a good boy, and write.' In vain did he push the paper away. In vain did he look annoyed. In vain did his olive whiskerless face look darker than ever. She mildly pertinacious, he had no chance whatever. And yet she never scolded,—not she. She was far too good a judge of human nature to storm, 'flare up,' as her father termed it. Others might storm; she was gentle and quiet, like some deep calmly-flowing stream through green meadows, beautiful with long-tangled weeds, covered with those white, bell-shaped flowers, so common in south country trout-streams, flowing onwards, as the old Greek poet expresses it—

‘Glad with many a dimpled smile.’

Yet, if suddenly checked, as resistless,—aye, far more so than the tempest,—calmly flowing over all obstacles, always having her own way, yet always pleasing in doing so. If she wanted a thing she never fought for it,—never sulked and pouted. If she could not get it by *hook*, she somehow managed by *crook*; and if she could not by *hook* or by *crook*, she still bided her time. In fact, she followed the advice of an elderly dissenting minister, who preached occasionally in the out-of-the-way parish in which her father lived. She one evening went to hear him, and the sermon made a great impression on her, and not only on herself, but on the old gamekeeper also who attended her. The sermon was on forbearance, and the preacher went on to say —

‘Never you be in a hurry to avenge yourself; only you bide your time, and you will be sure to drop upon him in the end.’

‘Aye,’ said the old keeper as they returned; ‘I never heard a better bit of doctrine in my life. Maybe I’ll catch Lanky Jem amongst the pheasants some night after all.’

So she bided her time, and *dropped upon* Gawaine very tolerably sometimes.

So Gawaine strolled on till he came to the village,—few villages in point of beauty could compare with it. Past it runs the wide stream, with here and there a large pleasure-boat. In fact, the place gave you the idea of standing in a large park, full of magnificent elm-trees. From the hill on which the church stood the course of the river might be traced for many miles, and in the background of the picture the huge Norman towers of Conyers Castle loomed large in the distance. The keep remained tolerably perfect,—an enormous tower, quite square, but enriched with buttresses, apparently more for ornament than for any other purpose; for they projected

but a slight distance from the wall, and looked more like pilasters than anything else. A small but very beautiful fragment had been incorporated into the new house, abbey, or mansion, whatever it was called. The old General had a fancy for calling it the Abbey,—no one knew why,—but the country people called it the Castle.

The keep was about one hundred and seventy feet in height, as I have said, perfectly square, the flat sides relieved by buttresses. On the ground floor of the tower was a large hall, supported by thick short pillars and round-headed arches, the capitals and arches beautifully enriched with toothed mouldings; and as Gawaine looked at the huge tower, he thought what a glorious room it would be for his children's tea-drinking, and how he could decorate the old hall with evergreens and banners. He then thought of poor Algernon, the friend of his early youth, lying dead there; and he turned into a narrow path that led to the rectory, and, opening a small gate, found himself in the garden.

The rectory was a long low house, with a thatched roof, how old it is impossible to say, but all the windows were of stone, with heavy mullions,—none of your modern affairs, where labour is dear, and men no longer work as if they *loved* their work. The whole of the walls were covered with ivy, which hung down in the wildest luxuriance. Myriads of the deepest red roses relieved the sombre appearance of the dark green.

Gawaine opened the front door. There was no hall, but a wide passage went through the house, as it were; the door at the other end, being wide open, discovered one of the most beautiful of flower-gardens. A rustic verandah, like the house thatched, and supported upon large pillars of twisted oak, ran round that side of the

house. A lawn like velvet, with here and there huge clumps of rhododendrons, gnarled roots of trees, the interstices filled with earth, and planted with verbenas. An old sun-dial stood in the grass-plat, with the Conyers arms upon it, and the garden was bounded by the river. On each side of the grass-plat were thick shrubberies, separating it from the kitchen-garden.

‘My lines have indeed fallen in pleasant places! how charmed she will be with the place!’ and he strolled on till he came to a rustic garden seat, from whence he had a fine view of the river and the Conyers woods. There was a thick shrubbery between himself and the public road leading from the village, and he sat musing for some little time, listening to the pure liquid tones of a nightingale which had taken its station on the boughs of an apple-tree in the small orchard near the house, and watching the heavily flowing stream, as it rolled past, and lazily counting the number of dimples then visible; for the trout were rising fast that evening, after the heat of the day; and ever and anon a chorus of children’s voices from the village street rose and fell, as the breeze sank or freshened, and wafted the sound nearer and more distinctly; and again he thought sadly on poor Algernon’s removal from the troubled scenes of life.

Presently he was startled by a rather harsh voice at his elbow:

‘Have your fortune told, my pretty gentleman. Cross the gipsy’s hand with a silver sixpence.’

Gawaine started, sprang up indignantly from his seat, — at least he attempted to do so, — but the seat, being very old and worm-eaten, came down with a crash.

‘A PRETTY gentleman, indeed! such insolence!’ and he furiously thrust away the woman, who would have assisted him to get up. ‘What has brought you here?’

said he, sternly; 'march off at once, or I'll have you taken up.'

She was a tall, handsome woman, with a dark complexion, splendid teeth, and magnificent eyes.

'Now, then, march off, or I'll give you into custody.'

'Very well,' said the woman, 'you may give me into custody as soon as you please.'

So off Gawaine stalked to the constable's, followed by the woman. He went into the house, and the woman sat upon the grass under the parlour window.

'Now, Mr. Constable, will you take the woman into custody as a rogue and vagabond?'

'Why! Mr. Conyers, sir! Boddington is a long way off, and my missis would not like my tramping over the country with a handsome Jezebel like that; I should never hear the end of it. No, sir, it can't be done. Well, sir! if you'll give me a warrant, I'll take her to the cross roads, stop a bit to lace my boot, and let her run away.'

'Well, Mr. Constable! a man who can't manage his wife—well, it isn't the thing!'

'Ah, sir, that's the way you newly married gentlemen talk. When you've been wed as long as I have, you won't boast. "If she will, she *will*; there's no denying," you know, sir. I always has my doubts when a gentleman boasts too much; mean no offence, sir.'

'Now, then, come along, you trumpery thing, you,' said the farmer, seizing her roughly by the arm. She walked on most complyingly, making eyes at him affectionately when any woman came near who could possibly be his wife, till the poor Constable shivered in his shoes. And on she went, abusing Gawaine and the whole family of Conyers, back to the eighth generation. So having arrived at the cross roads, the farmer knelt down to

unlace his boot, and pointed out to her the road to Bod-dington, promising to overtake her in two minutes; and when she had turned the corner, he set off home by a circuitous route as fast as he could.

‘Well, I am calliwizened,’ exclaimed he, as he beheld the gipsy woman coolly seated under the window, on the grass plot, smoking a short clay.

‘Well, to be sure!’ said she.

‘Now, mistress, tramp’s the word.’

‘I won’t go without you,’ said she; ‘and I should like to see you make me,’ and she looked at him like a tigress. ‘No, not both of you can make me; a dirty sneakish trick to leave me in that way.’

‘What’s to be done, sir?’ said he to Gawaine, who was standing in the passage. ‘If any of the lads were at home they would soon tumble her out. What’s to be done?’

‘Give her a shilling,’ said Gawaine, handing out a shilling to him, ‘and tell her to go.’

Presently he returned.

‘She says, “That you have committed her to prison, and go she will.” A shilling she would not look at.’

‘Try eighteenpence,’ said he.

He was equally unsuccessful.

‘She says, “She won’t go under half-a-crown.”’

‘Well,’ said Gawaine, ‘give her the money, and get rid of her. I hope the Colonel won’t hear of it.’

And Gawaine and the farmer went into the best parour, and prepared to spend the evening.

The room was a fine long room, with two long low windows of great size, on one side of the room, and one out of the other, fine old windows with mullions of yellow stone, where a few coats-of-arms still remained. The room was wainscoted round with dark oak of a light

chocolate colour; when the farmer came it had been daubed over with a fine rich coating of black-lead and oil; he had had it lightly scraped off, and the wood appeared in all its pristine beauty, richly veined, more like a nutmeg, and with a dull polish produced by light rubbing with a waxed cloth: over the chimney-piece were the arms of some family unknown, blazoned in variegated woods; the chimney-piece, of dark oak, went up to the ceiling, which was formed of massive beams, making squares wherever they crossed, each square reduced by smaller beams into smaller squares.

The whole effect was very fine. The chimney-piece was of the renaissance period, with numbers of figures in queer head-dresses, sinewy men and portly ladies, clad in the costumes of the period. The furniture was modern: a round mahogany table on or supported by three legs, several yew chairs, *Baxterian!* adapted for heavy Christians! garnished with little vessels of sawdust, a small corner cupboard with glass front, containing the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' 'The Whole Duty of Man,' 'The Modern Farrier,' a song book, two or three volumes of Punch, 'The Mutiny of the *Bounty*,' and one or two other books. On the table two portly tumblers (the farmer termed them rummers), three decanters, of gin, rum, and whisky, and a jug of home-brewed, the latter at Gawaine's especial request.

And they sat opposite, the two men, earnest-minded men both of them, and they talked about Algernon's death, and the farmer related over and over again the anecdotes relative to his son, which he had received from Algernon. They sat up till a late hour in the evening, or rather night, and Gawaine retired to his chamber escorted by the portly farmer.

‘This was my son’s room,’ said he; ‘but he has gone from home for some days.’

Gawaine paused before the fine stone chimney-piece entranced. ‘Not later than Henry VII.,’ said he. ‘I was not aware of anything so fine in England.’

‘Rum old thing,’ said the farmer. ‘Found it there when I pulled down the wainscot.’

It was a splendid specimen of rich yellow stone, something like the Ham Hill; round the arch of the chimney-piece were a number of shields, charged with every sort of bearing, probably the arms of the families with which that family (said to be the Martyns) had intermarried; above the row of shields came a row of monkeys, wonderfully carved, some twenty or thirty, all of them chained to clogs; above these were clusters of grapes, with vine stalks interlacing, and twisting and turning in every direction. There was an old legend that the alabaster monuments in the church had been carved by some Italian artist shortly after the Wars of the Roses, and no doubt the chimney-piece was the product of the same chisel.

So Gawaine undressed and got into bed. The sheets were beautifully clean and fragrant from lavender. The bed was so so, and somewhat short. Some people like their beds made with a gentle decline down to the feet, others like their beds made with a gentle ascent up from the feet; but I never yet heard of any man who liked his bed made like a pyramid, the apex being in the middle of the bed. Gawaine was sadly distressed. He was in total darkness. What to do he knew not; so he hit upon a plan: lying upon his back, he tried by a regular system of rising and falling to bump his bed into shape. Resting from his unwonted exertions, he heard a slight movement under the bed, and a noise as of a man sliding out. He leant cautiously out of the bed, and placed his hand down. Something slightly

brushed past his hand like the sleeve of a frieze coat. He had seen a gipsy that very day with just such a coat on. The gipsy woman's presence was now no mystery. Passing his hand upwards, he seized with both hands the strong muscular throat with the grasp of a vice, and rolled out upon him; twice something cold lightly grazed his throat, but inflicted no wound; and still further compressing his grasp, he kept shouting the farmer, who came in with a candle in one hand and his huge yeomanry sabre in the other.

‘Drat it, man!’ shouted he; ‘loose your hands, loose your hands, man. It’s my Jack’s cattle dog. Well, I never. I do believe you have nearly killed him: he always was used to sleep under that bed. What on earth have you been compounding your bed so! no wonder the dog thought it was coming down upon him. Good night, sir. Come out, you confounded brute, you!’

CHAPTER XI.



WE now return to the abbey or castle; for the terms castle and abbey were used indifferently; and the family, wearied out with watching, for they had been sitting up with Algernon for very many nights, had retired early, with just that feeling of relief arising from the knowledge that nothing worse can happen, and that harassing state of suspense, now at an end. Poor Pen had gone to bed, and, thoroughly wearied out, slept soundly for a few hours, and then awoke. A feeling of utter desolation had taken possession of her, and there she lay, with hot, tearless eyes, mentally acting over again the sad scenes of the previous day or two, and she lay still, praying much, and longing, oh, how anxiously, for the morning.

And by-and-bye there came a sort of twilight, and the room became full of strange, weird-like shapes, and a horrible looking monster, with a demon head and dragon-shaped body, wreathed with many coil, as the day broke, resolved itself into some article of lady's dress. What it proved to be deponent knoweth not. And then the sky was overspread with clouds bright, glowing as in a furnace. And then a hymn of praise rose from ten thousand voices, and the weird figures straightway vanished at the approach of light.

And Pen rose, and dipped her burning face in the cold spring water, and thinking that the fresh morning

air would do her good, proceeded with her toilette, and then crept downstairs, shuddering as she passed a certain door; but love proved stronger than fear, and, gently turning the handle, she entered.

There on the couch lay Algernon—a peaceful smile on his face—you would have said that he slept. The haggard expression had left his features, and the morning sun, through the richly coloured glass, threw a rose-coloured light over the face. She gazed on him, with the big tears coursing down her cheeks. Something glittered on the carpet, a pair of scissors. An idea presented itself to her mind. She gently took hold of one of his curls, and a faint voice asked her what on earth she was doing. With a wild scream she dashed from the room, flew up the stairs, and dropped down senseless at Lady Emily's door, frightening her considerably.

When she came to herself, she found Lady Emily standing over her with the Colonel, Lady Emily habited in (but a lady's dress is sacred), and the Colonel, with his tall, erect figure clothed in an old scarlet plaid dressing-gown which he had had in India, and, from repeated washings, fitted him like his skin, a most extraordinary figure, a handsome, aristocratic looking Don Quixote; for the Colonel being six feet three, was like most old Indians, a trifle lean.

‘Take the child up,’ said Lady Emily to her august spouse. ‘What is the use of standing staring there, with your mouth wide open? Carry her into the next room, and lay her upon the sofa at once. What can have frightened her so!’

And the Colonel did what he was bid very humbly. ‘These wives of our bosom have wills of their own somehow, and must be obeyed *as a general rule*. Up and dressed too! Where has she been?’

And after the usual amount of patting and shaking, and vinegar-ing; after a course of smelling salts, she came to herself, but seeing the Colonel habited in Bedwan, speedily relapsed into her former state; a thing not to be surprised at by those who had ever had the privilege of beholding him in that costume. At last she opened her eyes, and looking wildly at Lady Emily, exclaimed, 'He lives! he lives!'

They hurried to the room, and found it as she had represented. Algernon, much exhausted, but quite sensible and collected.

'Something dashed into the room just now,' said he; 'and awoke me; at least I thought so; perhaps it was only fancy. I'm very hungry.'

So they sent off instantly for the village doctor, who speedily made his appearance.

'Ah!' said he, as he entered the room, 'a decided case of syncope, quite to have been expected under the circumstances. I once knew a similar case to have lasted above forty hours. All fever gone! he will do well enough now. Meat? Oh, yes, a mutton chop, rather underdone. Wine? O ho! well, a table-spoonful put in a glass of spring water. He will do very well now; no fear whatever. And so Miss Blunt found him, did she? Pray, madam, do you claim him as a *waif* or as a *stray*? Well, my lady,' observed the little doctor, 'he will do well enough now. I think that you need be under no apprehension whatever about him.'

'These *trances*, to use a plain English term, not countenanced by the faculty, are decidedly abnormous. But what in the name of common sense induces a young man like Major Conyers, recently wounded, to go out fly-fishing! Why, the very throwing of the fly tends to irritate the region of the wound. Then, I hear

he gets up a bull-fight for his own private amusement, becoming his own tauridor. Then, he turns money-carrier, and gets knocked down by a bludgeon; but my friend here appears to be possessed of a very sound head. That rencontre has probably not tended much to his illness. Now his wound will heal thoroughly. I may state that Sir James's opinion quite agreed with my own, that the only thing to be apprehended was weakness. The ball appears to have done great mischief; there was not merely an exfoliation of one of the ribs — but, — however, these details do not appear to interest you. I will call again to-morrow. Now, nourish him if you like, but don't cram him; a couple of glasses of sherry, but that *must* be all. If you attend to my instructions you need be under no apprehensions whatever; but, otherwise, he is not out of the wood yet. There has been a bad accident near Billington, and I must be off there at once.'

So the doctor got into his elegant phaeton, with a powerful sixteen-hands Cleveland bay, for the doctor was well-to-do in the world, having inherited a *pretty* estate (as the phrase goes) from his father, and his profession had not proved a barren one; so the worthy doctor was considerably above the world.

In a day or two Algernon, who, like many others, had a pious horror of slops, managed to get round considerably. Before long he was able to creep down into the drawing-room, when, finding that Pen was thoroughly disposed to fetch and carry, availed himself of her services with the most perfect good will. She wrote his letters for him, read to him when he felt disposed, played for him in a very bold, dashing style, in a way that was very delightful to hear, provided that you happened to be unacquainted with the piece. Polkas and waltzes she

played well, and with all her heart. And days passed on, and the same sort of thing took place every day, and Algernon got stronger and better each day, and longed to be out and doing. And Pen, alas! became more and more attached to him day by day. Why it is that women are always more attached to those who do not appear to reciprocate their attachment, I don't know. I have no doubt whatever that Queen Eleanor talked to her intimates of poor dear Henry's infatuation for that vile Rosamond Clifford. What he, or any one else, could see to admire in her she could not imagine!!

No doubt, if Algernon had troubled himself at all about Pen, she would have soon got tired of him. However, so it was; and the days passed on, all much in the same way, and Pen's visit was drawing to a close. And one day Pen was sitting by the sofa, talking in the way that young ladies do. She detested London. If anything happened to her dear mother she would not stay a day there. Oh, yes, she was very fond of her aunt, very fond indeed; and I think that she would have been still more so had she known what had taken place in her absence; but for obvious reasons it had been kept very quiet, even from Pen; for Miss Pen, though a sweet girl, was rather a character, had a tolerably strong will of her own, hated meanness and falsehood, spoke the truth and never prevaricated, not even when hard pressed; but was quite prepared to insult you, if provoked too far and past all bearing. And I think that she would have given her aunt the telling of it.

And Algernon strongly advised her to look out for some nice young man; told her that coronets were cheap. Lord Millington might be had, it was said. He *had* heard that a letter had been received by Mrs. Blunt, the contents of which would be revealed to her

in due course of time, but there was a coronet on the seal; and on he went romancing in the same vein. He had been out in the morning, and felt very much better, and he quizzed poor Pen unmercifully.

‘Now, Pen,’ said he, ‘as you decline being my neighbour, and won’t have Lord Millington — I assure you that he is in earnest — don’t I know the hang-dog look a man puts on when he has some notion of proposing? — as you won’t have Lord Millington —’

‘I shall never marry,’ said Pen, in a low tone.

‘So all girls declare,’ said Algernon. ‘And why not, pray?’

‘Because,’ said Pen, in a husky, unnatural voice, ‘the only man I ever loved, or ever could love, either has no love for me, or is too proud or timid to ask me.’

Algernon looked up quickly. There was no mistaking that face.

‘Indeed,’ said he; ‘do you really mean that you’d do Maritana in the moated grange?’

There was a slight bend of the head, and lips gently applied to a hot, burning cheek, down which the big tears were slowly coursing.

And Lady Emily entered the room unexpectedly, and quietly observed, ‘Oh, you men, how blind you are!’ and Pen rushed up to her, and hid her face in her bosom — a sort of conventional propriety; I never could quite understand it myself; but I suppose that it is all right and proper.

And there was a certain amount of congratulation, of kissing, and shaking of hands; and Algernon and Pen sat side by side at dinner upon the most approved principles, and everything appeared to promise bright and prosperous days.

And Pen’s mother was written to, and I can very well

imagine what her reply was likely to be ; and it was arranged that Algernon should return with Pen, when able to travel.

And Algernon gained health and strength every day, and became able to stroll about with Pen. And Algernon said that his only fear was, that things were going too smoothly for the course of true love ; and Pen coolly told him that there were exceptions to every rule. Was this to prove an exception ? As Lord Eldon used to say, ' I have my doubts.'

So the Rev. Gawaine settled himself down at the Rectory, furnished his house with all the necessaries of conventional life, and he speedily turned his attention towards restoring the church. It was in deplorable condition : a splendid ruin. It had been built somewhere about the time of Henry VII. The tower, as we have before observed, was magnificent ; but the roof let in the wet ; several windows had been blocked up ; the seats for the poor were in wretched condition ; the farmers sat in cattle pens (the good old-fashioned family pew, one of the most convenient things in the world for every purpose except that one purpose of all others for which churches have been built).

I think I can call to mind a certain family pew of black oak, with glass doors and a fireplace, with a fair dame whose two children used to occupy much of her attention. Her son, in spite of continued remonstrances, every now and then making some discovery. First, it was a spider, or perhaps a pin on the floor, and then a smile would cross the face of certain fair maidens, sympathetically affecting certain moustachoed gallant though heavy-looking young men of the model *plunger* class ; and the squire would get up and poke the fire at stated periods.

Well, Gawaine determined to clear away such abomi-

nations ; and so there was a vestry meeting, and they met, according to custom, in the church ; and thence, at Gawaine's desire, they adjourned to his den at the Rectory ; and Gawaine taking the chair, a rate of a farthing in the pound was proposed and seconded, and Gawaine refused to put it to the meeting on the ground of insufficiency.

So Farmer Brown got up and said, that a farthing rate had always done in his father's time, and he didn't see why it shouldn't do now ; not that he approved of rates. He had heard it said that his farm was let to him so much cheaper than if he had taken it tithe free. But he wasn't for paying it ; no, not he. If the parson wouldn't take a farthing, he shouldn't have nothing : it was an immoral obligation, and was idolatrous, which the Bible said was akin to adultery, and he wouldn't have nothing to do with it.'

And Gawaine lectured and stormed without avail. He had got the true British farmer to deal with. His head well between his fore legs, a thistle under his tail, his heels well up in the air, and 'the more you make me the more I won't do it,' most decidedly stamped upon every movement of his long ears. It was no use ; they would do nothing. What had he been doing up in the belfry, ordering the bells to be turned one quarter round ? Those who had made the bells knew how to hang them, they presumed, better than he did. He would want a rate, he supposed, for that by-and-bye.

In vain did he point out to them that the wear and tear of centuries had told sadly upon the metal. That in a few years, if not turned, they would crack from the friction of the clapper against the sides, and then the expense would be tenfold. They did not see that they wanted bells ; one was enough, in all conscience.

Gawaine rang the bell. Enter an elegant-looking maid-

servant, who informed them that luncheon was ready. So they went into the dining-room, where Mrs. Gawaine Conyers received them all most graciously; and they sat down to table, when one gentleman, being thirsty, drank off the contents of his wine cooler, and was immediately imitated by all the rest.

The luncheon was good. A huge piece of boiled beef at one end, and, I rather think, a turkey at the other. At all events, it would have been a turkey had it been in season. And they behaved very much as British yeomen do under similar circumstances — in a very gentlemanly style of way, *considering* they were guilty of a few gaucheries. Just as Farmer Johnson spread his napkin neatly on his chair, and then sat down upon it, and Farmer Sims trying ineffectually to eat his soup with a fork, called out to the neat-handed Phyllis to bring him another spoon without them *slents* in it.

All men have their weak points. One of Gawaine's was, that he could brew. So he desired one of the servants to open a bottle of beer, requesting Mr. Sims to favour him with his opinion of it.

'You see, Mr. Sims, it is my own brewing, and I think that you will find it pretty tidy.'

So Mr. Sims tasted it; and he held it up to the light, and he tasted it again, and again held it up to the light and tasted it again, and then, placing his tumbler on the table, said, emphatically —

'I don't care who brewed it, 't isn't good!'

Mrs. Gawaine could not resist a smile. Gawaine looked sold. However, the Fates interfered to prevent his total discomfiture, and suggested to Mrs. Gawaine, in an evil hour, to request Mr. Sims to help her to some blanc-mange.

Mr. Sims looked doubtfully at the dish before him; and then turning up the cuff of his coat, as if about to grasp a

plough handle, having evidently mistaken the dish for a dish cover, seized it, embedding his hands firmly therein.

The scene was very striking. Gawaine smiled grimly, pretending not to see it.

‘I humbly ask your pardon, marm,’ meekly observed Mr. Sims.

Mrs. Gawaine told him that it was a mere trifle.

On the whole, the luncheon, or dinner, passed off pleasantly enough. Hot water was brought in, and as the day was wet, they proceeded to make an afternoon of it; and Mrs. Gawaine having left the party, Mr. Sims rose to propose her health. And Gawaine, in returning thanks, spoke of the pleasure he had anticipated in coming among them, which expectation, he had every reason to think, would be fully realised. He then spoke of the duty incumbent upon all to keep God’s house in repair. He told them that true economy consisted in doing what they had to do well; that though it was the duty of the parish to expend their money prudently, it should be done wisely; and that there was such a thing as being penny wise and pound foolish; and that the cheapest plan was always to do whatever they had to do well. No farmer would buy inferior or damaged seed, merely because he could get it cheap. And he expected them to put the church in a proper state of repair. So far as restoring the church to its former beauty, he thought that they should come upon the neighbourhood for that.

So they voted Gawaine a liberal rate, on condition that he took upon himself to raise what was wanting to complete the work.

CHAPTER XII.



AND so Captain King went up to dress for dinner, carrying his *kettle* with him, as the wicked boys in London termed his purchase, and having stowed it carefully away in his bedroom, descended to the drawing-room. The dinner was a quiet one, but sufficiently elegant; for Mrs. Blunt had heard of Dr. Johnson's description: 'A good enough dinner in its way, sir; but not good enough to *invite* a man to.'

And the evening was spent like the previous one, with the important exception that Mrs. Blunt had a long letter of Pen's to read, giving a description of the commencement of Algernon's illness.

Moreover, she said the billing and cooing was too much for her.

Certainly the proverb was right, 'There was no fool like an old fool.' She could not stand such nonsense. If they chose to make fools of themselves they must be guided by *her* time. Peregrine, she decided, was more knave than fool. Tabitha! Well, in her the latter quality predominated. So the two young things were obliged to be on their good behaviour. And the fair Tabitha retired to her room somewhat disgruntled.

'Well, old fellow,' said the Captain to the reflection of himself in the large mirror, 'I'm proud of you, my boy. Faith, who thought of your doing Cupid, with your white head! "Gratias agimus!"' as we used to say.

So he set to work rasping his weather-beaten head,

with a pair of Truefit's handsomest brushes. Though an arrant screw as ever lived, he did not value money so far for its own sake as not to spend it freely when an eligible investment presented itself. Here was a valuable mine to be worked out. Aye! a mine of Golconda, as he thought.

'Faith, she appears to have a tearing temper. Still there is blood in her, and in that case something can be done: with a thorough-bred one knows where one is; but one can never thoroughly break in one of those cart horses!'

So he proceeded to undress, carefully folding up and brushing everything of a brushable description.

'Oh, no,' said he, 'not going to trust a careless fellow to chuck one's things about anywhere, and to rasp off all the nap.'

And in his dreams an indescribable sort of figure, clothed in something like graveclothes, tied round above the head and under the feet, came to him. He knew at once that it was his wife; and she warned him against his contemplated marriage, threatening him with something terrible if he disobeyed her injunctions. And in his dream he rudely taunted her with jealousy, and advised her to return. And the figure receded slowly from him with a wailing cry.

And presently a loud sound was heard, and it made him tremble; and it grew louder and louder. With a cry he sprang up in his bed and awoke. Aye, but there was the same sound. What was it?

'It is the train,' said he.

But it appeared close to the window. Drawing the blind slightly aside, he peeped out. For a time he saw nothing. Still the terrible sound continued, and close to the window it appeared to be. He had noticed that morning that the back of the house formed part of the

square,—a sort of courtyard,—and at right angles to his window ran a steep roof, higher than his window. And presently the moon (which was in its first quarter) came out from behind a cloud, casting a lurid, wizard-like light over everything. Huge clouds, of a sort of blackish-yellow, were passing rapidly over the face of the heavens. The chimneys cast strange unnatural shadows on the buildings and on the ground, which appeared to *gibe* and *mow* at each other! And raising his eyes to the roof above his head, he beheld a sight that actually made his heart stand still!!

On the edge of the roof, some forty feet from the ground, sat a terrible figure of huge proportions, dark as night! and, to his terror, it cast no shadow on the roof behind it. Its eyes were as two balls of fire! He sank upon his knees, and, in an inaudible voice, began a Pater noster. And he looked at the figure, and it raised its two hands high above its head, holding up aloft a huge club. And Peregrine saw that the figure became suddenly of a white heat, burning as though it glowed in a furnace. And the terrible cry was again uttered. And again were the hands uplifted as though in the act of denouncing judgment and vengeance upon the earth, and the inhabitants thereof.

‘Weep! weep! weep!’ exclaimed the voice, and threw up a handful of earth into the air, some of which rattled on the window above his head.

And the old man prayed fervently in his terror, and made many a vow of amendment of life. Hell appeared to be opening her mouth to receive him.

And here the night-wind moaned and wailed as it passed through the stacks of chimneys, as though groaning and travailing with the burden of the demon forms sweeping by on the wings of the storm blast. And the old man

felt a cold thrilling sensation pass through his veins, as though the hand of death had been laid upon his heart. He made the sign of the Cross, and the terrible figure sprang upon its feet, thrice waved the club round its head, and vanished over the house.

Shivering with the cold he got into bed again, and thought about repenting of his former life, and decided that he would take the matter into serious consideration.

And so old Peregrine thought he saw a ghost, or something worse, and was frightened out of his wits. How could the man have been such an idiot! Peregrine King, gentle reader, was no idiot. A shrewd, hard-headed, heartless man of the world: there lay his folly. You are wiser, and not to be *done*.

But suppose that there are such things as evil spirits (aye, and if our eyes were opened in this very room we might see myriads, kept in check by God's good providence), supposing that such a thing were possible, and that a messenger of evil might be sent, as in the days of that expedition against Ramoth Gilead.*

Is such a thing possible? and if it be within the bounds of possibility, the matter is settled at once.

Meeting death in the battle-field, when a man's blood is up, with drum-beating and colours flying, is a very different thing from a summons in the dead of night, when there is a fearful stillness. A man's heart tells him that he has lived as a son of the Evil One, and that there is nothing for him but a fearful looking for of judgment. And it is only the *fool* who saith in his heart there is no God.

Then Algernon and the Colonel, both sincere and good men, yet educated in different schools. The

* 1 Kings xxii. 20.

Colonel, one of the old school, brought up under many difficulties ; all his early life hampered in money matters ; marrying late in life, and in narrow circumstances, for his station in life, for very many years. Yet honourable and upright ; true and just in all things (I mean, endeavouring to be so) ; anxious to do right for the sake of doing right, yet stern and uncompromising in manner.

Then Algernon, a man of totally different character, amiable and loving ; brave, and true as steel ; cheerful and light-hearted, full of glee ; and thus continually led away to do things which, in his soberer moments, he disapproved of ; yet always having in view the end of his calling — humble in heart. For such an one death has few terrors, come when it may.

Here we have three distinct characters, representing three distinct genera. The old orthodox, the modern muscular, and the old conventional : two positives and a negative ; the negative, if judged by some, to be in the words of the celebrated coach-builder, ‘ a good trade to live by, a fearfully bad one to die by.’

However, the next morning the gallant old Captain was up by times, luxuriated in a cold bath, and set off for a long walk before breakfast.

Miss Tabitha was up by times also, to meet her boy ; but the bird had flown, and was doing an honest stroke of business long before any of the party were up.

So in due course of time he returned to breakfast, and was somewhat startled by Mrs. Blunt expressing a hope that he had not been disturbed by the *sweeps* ! the preceding night. It appeared that they had mistaken the house, and having got into the wrong courtyard, one of the party, a remarkably active man, considerably above six feet, had climbed up on the roof, and was playing off all sorts of antic. for the amusement of his compeers,

little thinking of the indescribable alarm he was causing to an elderly gentleman, one Captain King.

‘Ah!’ said he to himself, ‘how conscience makes cowards of us all! I thought that it was Old Harry himself in very earnest!’

And so he went on with his breakfast, slightly relieved in his own mind at not having to build a cathedral. ‘For now, of course,’ said he to himself, ‘the match is off and cancelled.’

So Captain King started off for the city at once, having to return in time to dress for a six o’clock dinner, to meet Sir Ezekiel Storton, one of the trustees, to whom the management of the Blunt’s property had been entrusted. So the Captain returned at an early hour to dress for dinner. He had heard much of Sir Ezekiel; for, added to his being an admirable man of business, Sir Ezekiel held a high position in the religious world. No firm subscribed so largely to every charitable object as Sir Ezekiel’s, ‘Storton, Hanson and Capias.’ Was it a mission to Timbuctoo? when others gave tens they gave hundreds. Was there a (so-called) society established for the liberation of religion, or another society established for the persecution of that other society for the luggage and superfluous cash liberation, they, with singular inconsistency, supported both societies.

At six he made his appearance with two gentle-looking daughters. He was about the middle height, very pale, with narrow black whiskers, large black eyes, very large mouth, with very white irregular and massive teeth; his hair was cut close, parted on one side; his manner was peculiar, slightly unctuous; and he appeared to be bestowing incessant benedictions on every one.

Old Peregrine divined the man’s character at once, and had a suspicion that he himself was being *trotted* out, to

use his own expression; and thought he, 'If that fellow intends to poke his nose into my affairs, he had better look out for squalls!'

And so they went into dinner, the two gentle-looking girls bringing up the rear, with their arms round each other's waists.

Sir Ezekiel was very communicative; he had been lately staying with a certain earl, who played a very leading part in ecclesiastical matters, and looked rather surprised when Captain King took up the running, and brought in a few exceedingly good anecdotes.

The Captain had been at first puzzled to know what game to play; but having seen that the man was unreal in his professions (set a thief to catch a thief), he decided on holding his own.

Miss Tabitha was in awe of the pious baronet certainly, and believed in him; but it was very evident Mrs. Blunt did not, and she would be a far better ally than Sir Ezekiel. He had somehow, by judicious praises of her daughter (an old rascal, he had scarcely seen her) slightly to ingratiate himself with Mrs. Blunt.

Peregrine was a gentlemanly-mannered man, full of anecdote, and had seen much of the world. Mrs. Blunt knew that he was not a religious man, and it was no use pretending to be one.

The party was made up by the Incumbent of the church at which Sir Ezekiel worshipped, a sleek-looking man of about forty, with the regulation whiskers, high shirt collar, a high white cravat, villanously tied, and a low double-breasted black cloth waistcoat, with an acre of shirt front; a good, earnest, but not over-wise man; patronised exceedingly by Sir Ezekiel, and who took Sir Ezekiel at his own valuation.

He sat between the two Miss Stortons, and talked

about Exeter Hall. Sir Ezekiel was very great on that subject, and in a grave way gave a description of the usual speakers: of each one, from the noble Earl downwards, he had something disparaging to say. The inference to be drawn, of course, being the vast inferiority of all to the talented and pious Sir Ezekiel; his reverend friend listening complacently; but sometimes thinking that a little more of the spirit of charity would be desirable; but he reasoned that even the best of men have some slight blemishes.

And then Captain King made himself very acceptable to the young ladies, which anything but pleased Miss Tabitha. He told them of hairbreadth escapes in India, from tiger-hunting down to garrison balls! when the two young ladies drew themselves up, and began to smoothe their tuckers.

‘We have never been to a ball,’ said the elder. ‘Papa says it is sinful.’

‘Indeed,’ said Captain King. ‘Pray, what is the harm?’

‘Oh, but what is the good, Captain King?’

‘I could tell you a great deal of good. People must have amusements, and if they cannot have unexceptional amusements, they will betake themselves to others of a much worse class. I could give you a dozen illustrations. What is the good of that scarlet wreath you wear?—what is the good of those rose-coloured silks, when plain book-muslin would have done as well? Now, what is the harm, my dear young lady?’

‘Well, I should think there was much. If one gentleman saw another gentleman dance better than himself, or if one lady saw another who waltzed more gracefully, it might break her heart?’

‘Very possible,’ said Captain King; ‘but anything but

probable. Would it go *pop*, when it broke? But to be serious, for my part, and it is the experience of an old man, many of my most unexceptional hours — many of those which I can now look back upon with the greatest satisfaction,— and my life has been neither a short nor an uneventful one,— have been spent in a ball-room. And, to an old man, there must have been very many an hour in his life which he would now be thankful to have the power of recalling: many a scene he would gladly efface from the page of his memory.’ Here Captain King, thinking that it would not do to talk what HE considered ‘bunkum,’ paused, and came to a conclusion, merely saying, ‘that he could see no harm in a ball-room.’

Sir Ezekiel overheard his last remark, and folding his hands and turning up his eyes, he exclaimed in a voice of horror, as though Peregrine had uttered blasphemy, ‘O Captain King, where would your *soul* be if you dropped down *dead* in a ball-room?’

‘Humph,’ growled old Peregrine, ‘pretty much where yours would be, if you dropped down dead in the act of drinking that glass of sparkling hermitage!’

Sir Ezekiel looked as if he had, to use a vulgar expression, given half-a-crown and only got eighteen-pence change in return.

Old Peregrine was still a little doubtful about Sir Ezekiel. He didn’t at first know how to treat him.

‘Confound the fellow,’ thought he to himself; ‘he expects everybody to fall down at his feet, and worship him. I’m no saint myself; but that fellow is a regular wolf in sheep’s clothing: evidently thinks himself a top-sawyer. How the deuce those fellows make the women believe in them, I can’t understand. And that simple parson who has gone with him, he swallows everything he tells him. I wonder what Tabby thinks of him. *Believes* in

him, of course. All women do. 'Faith, I might have done worse than turn popular preacher. If I knuckle down to that fellow at all, he will prove a thorn in my side. Perhaps I had better contradict him flatly, and snub him. Well, that would require time. Perhaps I had better do the dignified! Well, I don't know. Mrs. Blunt does not, I am persuaded, put unlimited confidence in him. Tabitha does. Well, women are all alike. Wonder if she has been spending the morning in practising "Tabitha King?" No doubt she has. She is a herald, too; probably has been drawing the Gumps arms in conjunction with those of King! no doubt of it.'

And so old Peregrine went maundering on, sipping his claret with great gusto, and saying very little, till the ladies left the room. He then found Sir Ezekiel very decent company. He told one or two good stories, and then set old Peregrine off, who had a few really good anecdotes, and very well worth hearing, if you had never heard them before. And so old Peregrine prosed on about Dum-Dum, and the Hills, and Allahabad, and sipped his claret at intervals, in a measured way.

Now, there are different ways of imbibing.

One man takes a full, grave, dignified sip, as if he loved a quiet glass in moderation.

Another gets through his wine with nervous siplets, as if he drank moved by a sense of duty.

Another man drinks parenthetically, tossing off two-thirds of a glass at a time, as though having a certain amount to get through, a certain stated time to pass, if not to waste, a certain infliction to be borne from a sense of duty, and then home to more congenial employment.

Sir Ezekiel belonged to the last class. He tossed off his wine as though the spirit had a decided contempt for the body.

Under present circumstances, Peregrine King was at last enjoying himself thoroughly. Sir Ezekiel was markedly civil. The small incumbent an excellent listener, and really interested in Peregrine's stories.

Peregrine had just finished the last glass of claret, and the old butler bringing in the replenished jug, placed it before Sir Ezekiel. Peregrine noticed a sort of brown-looking froth on the surface of the claret, and mentally anathematised the man for his careless decanting. Sir Ezekiel tossed off his glass mechanically, changed colour, and exclaimed hastily, and in an alarmed tone —

‘Good heavens, I am a murdered man!!’

‘Humph!’ said Peregrine King, pouring out and examining a glass; ‘furniture oil! Why couldn’t the fellow,’ thought he, ‘drink his wine like a gentleman, instead of gulping it down like an ichthyosaurus? Here, man,’ cried he, ‘furniture oil is decidedly disagreeable, but not dangerous, if strong measures are at once taken. Come along to my dressing-room,’ cried he, seizing up the mustard-pot with one hand, and the hot water jug with the other. ‘You,’ said he, in an under tone, to the small incumbent, ‘had better join the ladies. Sir Ezekiel is in a desperate funk; but I fancy that it will prove nothing worse than a pint and a half of claret in a furniture-oil bottle. That would be quite sufficient to account for the aroma. Faith *that* is no joke, though.’

And so the ladies retired. And Mrs. Blunt, being an invalid, lay down on the sofa, and the elder of the two Miss Stortons sat herself down on a footstool at Mrs. Blunt's feet, and asked an infinity of questions about Pen; what she was doing; when she was coming back. And Mrs. Blunt told her a great deal about Pen, and yet very little compared with what she might have told her. For Pen had just written to her to tell her of her engagement to

Algernon; and Lady Emily had also written, giving a long description of Algernon and his good qualities. And *this* gentle and warm-hearted girl (there was nothing in the other sister) took such an interest in everything relating to Pen — for they were sworn friends — that Mrs. Blunt felt strongly disposed to tell her of Pen's engagement. However, she thought better to defer it.

The other Miss Storton was, strange to say, an admirer of Miss Tabitha Gumps, who, as she had 60,000*l.* pounds, was invariably pronounced to be a most superior person by Sir Ezekiel Storton, and his wife and daughter made a point of believing him. Miss Tabitha had a strong notion of having her own way:—well, that was *character*. She had the gift of saying the most cutting things without a spice of provocation:—well, that was *sincerity*. She had a keen sense of her own interest, and was always planning some scheme or other, the object of which was some personal gratification or advantage, generally at the cost of somebody else. Indeed she had always a strata-gem, for an extra knob of sugar even, and most successful in procuring a second cup of tea, before the filling up of the pot.

And so the second young lady, who was not over sharp, was asking every sort of question about Captain King. How long he had been in the army? Whether he had ever been a missionary? She rather fancied he had. Had he a large house where he lived? Was he not a very old man? Dear me! she thought he had been much older. And so she went on with a number of the emptiest remarks, till the entrance of the small incumbent, which somewhat startled Mrs. Blunt, who made some reference as to the privileges of an invalid; and the other ladies went through a combined movement, which the

author verily believeth to have been an uncrossing of legs ; Miss Tabitha being still a girl, and not yet entitled to take brevet rank.

And of course the ladies were alarmed ; and the small incumbent having, from a feeling of delicacy, made no allusion to the furniture oil, Miss Tabitha thought that he had suddenly gone mad, and thought of rushing out to protect her boy ! And Mrs. Blunt suspected ' that that agreeable and gentlemanly old sinner had made poor dear Sir Ezekiel tipsy.' But she kept her suspicions to herself ; and certainly Sir Ezekiel's pallid face went far to confirm her in her surmises. And the whole Storton party departed, much to Mrs. Blunt's satisfaction ; and so wishing the young couple good night, she retired to her dressing-room.

And so Miss Gumps's suspicions had proved correct after all. Well, perhaps it was that her attention had been called to matrimony generally, with a special relation to her own case. And she then read Lady Emily's letter over again. Could one human being speak more confidently of another ? And she had long known Lady Emily, and thoroughly appreciated her sterling character. Algernon was poor ; but what mattered money in such a case to one rich in everything constituting real wealth. How truly had Lady Emily judged her in this matter ! And now she thought that it mattered little when her time came, for now could she depart in peace.

CHAPTER XIII.

‘ND so Captain King was off early this morning,’ observed Mrs. Blunt to her sister-in-law, at breakfast. ‘I am glad to see that you were up in time to see him off. I am, as you are well aware, an invalid,’ said Mrs. Blunt, with a quiet smile; ‘but am glad to have been so well represented. These early hours are all very well for you warblers!!’

‘Now, sister, you shuddent,’ said Miss Gumps, calling up an atrabilious blush, with a certain amount of difficulty. ‘How could you!’

‘Well! when do you intend to announce your engagement?’

‘Oh, not for a long time. Pray, don’t mention it to my niece, whatever you do.’

‘Why not?’

‘Well, sister, I don’t wish it.’

‘Oh, very well, if that’s the case, I won’t; but I fancy that Pen won’t trouble you much;’ so she informed her of Pen’s engagement, and read Lady Emily’s letter.

‘Eh, dear!’ exclaimed Miss Gumps, ‘and that will never do.’

‘Why not, pray?’ inquired Mrs. Jones.

‘Of course not! Why, he has only 300*l.* a-year, and it’s an estate too; and estates are always either mortgaged, or draining to do, or tenants running away. Now, I do hope, sister, that you have written to say that will never

do ; of course, it won't do. I shall set *my* face against it, at all events.'

' You may do what you please with your own daughters hereafter, Miss Gumps (she at once drew herself up, but relaxed into a pleased smile); but if it is my wish that Pen should marry a man some fifteen years older than herself, and no great amount of fortune, I really don't see who is to prevent it.'

' Oh, no, sister; of course not. But I never should have supposed that Pen would have been allowed to marry a mere fortune-hunter. Why, the man has next to nothing.'

' Indeed,' replied Mrs. Blunt. ' Pray, does it follow that a man who has nothing must of necessity marry a lady without a portion? On the principle, I suppose, that two negatives make an affirmative! Now, pray, what fortune has Captain Peregrine King, I should like to know? '

' Well, sister, you wouldn't have *me* mercenary. He keeps horses, and appears to have a large, at least, a moderate establishment, and finds it impossible to spend half his income.'

' He told you that himself, I presume,' said Mrs. Blunt.

' No; I heard it from a most trustworthy source,' replied Miss Gumps. ' Sir Ezekiel knows all about him.'

' That I *know* to be untrue,' mentally soliloquised Mrs. Blunt.

' Well, Miss Gumps, it does not follow, because a man does a prudent thing, that he is necessarily mercenary. You would not have Algernon (I suppose I must call him so now) marry a girl with nothing. Now, pray, as to yourself, which is the more likely to be mercenary? Here is Captain King, evidently very close and careful—*almost* (forgive my saying so) *mean* in little things. He says, he does not spend half his income. Now, you have 60,000*l*.

Mind, I say nothing as to relative ages; it is not as if he had known you all his life, much less has there been an ancient tendresse between you two. His wife has not been dead *nearly* a year. Do not these careful habits imply that he is fond of money? Remember that I am, if anything, under-stating facts. I trust you may be happy, but as you are older than I am, I have as yet said little on the subject, fearing that my opinion will have little effect. Pray, don't think I am speaking unkindly. Captain King will find you tolerably well able to hold your own, and I dare say all may turn out pretty well.'

Miss Gumps relaxed into a grim smile. She, too, had had her misgivings, but they were very transitory; however, she said little more upon the subject, perhaps she did not think the less.

'Well, but sister,' presently observed Miss Gumps, 'when do you suppose Pen's wedding will take place?'

'That I really cannot tell; perhaps towards the latter part of the autumn; but of course all will depend upon circumstances.'

CHAPTER XIV.

‘**W**ELL,’ said the Colonel to his wife in a sort of half-smothered tone, ‘how long is this billing and cooing to be the order of the day?’

‘Really, Gerald,’ replied the wife, from her dressing-room, ‘I cannot possibly tell.’

‘I am sick of it,’ growled the Colonel; ‘I can’t go into my own library without seeing Algernon and Pen rushing to opposite corners of the room, as if they wanted me to believe that they had never been within a dozen yards of each other. It worries me out of all sense of propriety; I can’t stand it much longer, and what’s more, I won’t. Pen must go. I assure you it’s no joke. It may be all very well for you; but it’s no joke to me, I can assure you. I am sick of riding alone; I want Algernon to ride; of course, he is out nutting with Pen, and Charley for chaperon. I want some one for a companion. I detest driving alone; of course, you are out with the ponies and Algernon and Pen. No, I can’t stand it, and what’s more, I won’t.’

‘Now, Gerald, how can you be so selfish? You are really unpardonable. I intend to have Pen here as long as I possibly can.’

A heavy fall was heard, and a tall gaunt figure, clad in a red tartan dressing-gown entered *his* dressing-room. The room was sadly too small, but it had the advantage of being near, and very much labour had he bestowed upon

it. At one end of the room was a long, rather high sofa, to which the gallant Colonel called everybody's attention, and when they had admired it sufficiently (between ourselves, as ugly an article of furniture as often met with in a gentleman's house), he then used, with great deliberation, to raise one end till it touched the side wall, and lo! behold a bath, some seven feet long by three. He was indeed proud of this curious affair, and was ever praising it, till one unlucky day it came down with a run upon his head. Luckily the cushion was soft, and there was no bar of wood in the way; there he *was*, however, like an oyster in its shell; move he could not, and there he *remained* till his valet, having knocked at the door for some time without effect, suspecting something to be wrong, entered the room, and discovered the gallant Colonel in a trap. Lately, however, he had invented a sort of guard in the form of a pair of legs, which swung backwards and forwards, and till folded back, prevented the chance of another such accident.

'Well,' cried he to his wife, through the partially opened door, 'what am I to do to-day? Here the horses must go out, and who is to take them out, I wish to know?'

'Why shouldn't you drive over to Boddington, and see how the new church is progressing.'

'By myself? I dare say, thank you! You, I know, can't come, and Algernon, of course, he'll be at that girl's apron-string, that is, he would, if she had one, the whole blessed day. Serve him right to take Pen with me. Think I will; but I know you'll peach. No,' said he, after a short pause, during which he was endeavouring to staunch the blood which flowed from rather a bad cut he had just given himself, 'I'll be shot if I stand this sort of thing any longer; either Algernon or Pen shall go:

I won't have both, that's flat; and now, Emily, you understand me.'

'Gerald, Gerald, I am quite ashamed of you. If it had been Captain King I shouldn't have been surprised: after all I think he is the better man of the two. Should such a sad event occur as would give me the opportunity of making another choice, I think that I should marry Captain Peregrine King.'

'Emily, how can you talk so like a *fool*! Any one would think you a perfect goose, with no more feeling than a brute,' growled the Colonel, really angry: he used continually to be talking about his second wife. Pen was to have been promoted to that honour; but now the case was altered; but woe betide Lady Emily if she made any such speech! He called it indelicate in the extreme. How could she, an old woman with grey hair, the mother of a family too, talk in such a flippant manner! he was amazed at her; he wondered to see how old looking she had become of late; and so he maundered on, thoroughly put out.

'Of course, Gerald,' said Lady Emily, after a pause occasioned by a violent splashing in the Colonel's dressing-room, which had been terminated by an angry roar, for he had been washing his head well with yellow soap, and had got it gloriously into his eyes, he was thoroughly out of humour, and accordingly was making a blunder of everything;—'of course, Gerald, it is not pleasant to drive out alone; why not take the barouche, pick up Gawaine by the way, see how the church is getting on, and bring them both back to dinner? You can tease him about the church-rates, you know.'

'Gawaine, indeed,' said he, 'why he's always making silly, impertinent remarks, and thinks them clever too; never sees the force of an argument when directed

against himself; flippant and shallow, very shallow indeed!

‘Well, but my dear, he took high honours at Oxford.’

‘I don’t believe it,’ growled the Colonel. ‘And supposing he did, it is no very great proof of talent. I took no honours,’ snarled he, rasping away at his white head with a hard brush till his head resembled a porcupine, ‘and I don’t see that I am the worse for it. And that little wife too, with an eternal sniggle on her face whenever he makes any of his offensively impertinent remarks. I am *sick* of the whole set, and that’s enough. I hate a woman eternally sniggling. Humph! well, about the church-rates; I think that I can floor him there; so I will,’ said he, quite restored to good humour. His dissenting friends had sent him a paper strongly urging on all Christian men the duty of at once giving up church-rates, tithes, endowments of all kinds, except those in the possession of the laity, which were to be safe from the hands of the spoiler; what was next to be done when they had rooted up all the houses of God in the land was not openly stated at present. ‘Well,’ thought he, ‘I’ll have a rise out of Gawaine to-day, *fus est ab Hoste doceri*, Gawaine has a perfect horror of chaff, and I humbly flatter myself that I carry too many guns for him on most occasions. Well, it’s a grand day for a drive, and it’s no fun shooting by one’s self, and poor Algernon has had cause sufficient to fight shy of guns and gunpowder for some time;’ so saying, he finished his dressing and hurried downstairs.

‘Another letter from my dissenting friends,’ said he, ‘and a printed one too; what’s it all about? A lot of questions* for me to answer I suppose; well, that’s cool

* The following questions were sent all over the country by the so-called Liberation Society a year or two ago.

anyhow. Well, here goes; Emily, are you listening? Question number 1. "*How would you like to be compelled to pay a rate for the support of a dissenting chapel?*"

'How would I LIKE it? Well, I don't see that it is a matter of liking or not liking. If, however, I had succeeded to property legally charged with a rate for such support; just as I should pay rent for a property which might form the endowment of a dissenting chapel. Why, let me see! I pay four pounds a-year to the Unitarian chapel at Boddington; that small property I inherited from my grandmother was bought charged with it.

' "2. *Would you not complain of it as a grievous injustice and as violating your conscience?*"

'No, I certainly should not, for I should look upon myself as a confounded hypocrite if I did. I dare say old Peregrine King would talk about his conscience. I could fancy that I see the old sinner now, prating about liberty of conscience,—the preaching of the Gospel in its fulness, without fee or reward. I wonder whether there will be an anti-church-rate meeting at Boddington; I suppose old Perry will go in for liberty of conscience. A man seldom talks about liberty of conscience till he has *burked* his conscience, and tries to persuade himself that killing is no murder. Now, here goes for number

' "3. *Can you then with a good conscience defend the levying of a church-rate, which obliges Nonconformists to contribute to the support of your place of worship?*"

'Of course I can; and with a very good conscience, too, and a *churchman's* conscience, and not a dissenting one either, without any straining at gnats and swallowing of camels. For, my dissenting friends, you are many of you ready enough to avail yourselves of the privileges of churchmen. You marry at the church, you christen at the church, you bury at the church, and much you grum-

ble if the parson be a little too late. Poor Richardson, for instance. Here goes for question

‘ “ 4. *Is that doing unto others as we would they should do unto us ?* ”

‘ Aye, marry ! most decidedly it is ! ’

‘ “ Q. 5. *Do you say that you cannot help it ; that it is the law, which, until it be altered, must be obeyed ?* ”

‘ No ; I don’t say anything of the sort. Why is the Church to be robbed by a set of scoundrels who won’t pay their just dues ? When I was a poor man, I made it a case of conscience not to pay my tailor oftener than I could possibly help ; not that he ever bothered me much ; but such a bright idea as that of utterly repudiating the debt altogether, as a matter of *conscience*, never occurred to me. And I am sure public opinion would have been in my favour in that case. Why, ninety-five parishes in every hundred wish to retain the rate. A pretty set of rascals !

‘ “ Q. 6. *Would such a reply satisfy you, were you the party aggrieved ? Would you not say that laws cannot make bad things better, and unjust exactions less unjust ?* ”

‘ No ; I should not say anything of the sort ; for I look upon them as neither bad nor unjust. Why should my great-grandchildren seize upon the endowment of the church I am building, and then turn the building into dwelling-houses, or a fives-court ? ’

‘ “ Q. 7. *Is it true that you cannot help it ? Have you ever tried to get the law altered ?* ”

‘ No ; I don’t exactly see that I wish it. ’

‘ “ Q. 8. *Are you obliged to act upon it whether you will or not ? Cannot you practically repeal the law, by paying for maintaining forms of worship out of your own pockets ? Is there any law to prevent that ?* ”

‘ No ; there is no law to prevent it ; but I don’t see

why we are to give up our rights, because only some five parishes in every hundred refuse the rate.

‘ “ Q. 9. *Do you never feel ashamed that the building in which you worship God should be kept in repair, and even your clergyman’s surplice washed, and the sacramental bread and wine provided at the expense of people who derive no benefit from them, and many of whom support their own religious institutions besides ?* ”

‘ No, I don’t feel ashamed ; not a bit more than I do of receiving my rent from Robinson, who has a notion that all men are equal, and who thinks that every man ought to start on 200 acres freehold, with twenty niggers to work for him ! But I have had enough of these questions. I should like to have Gawaine’s opinion on the subject. Get a rise out of him, I fancy ! ’

So the gallant Colonel, at half-past ten, got upon the box of the barouche, and tooled his four bays with a certain amount of professional skill over to Gawaine’s, and there found the Bishop strolling about the garden by himself.

The Bishop, when by himself, had a meditative style of walking ; he was nearly as tall as the Colonel, and far broader across the shoulders ; but looked ten years younger ; Time’s hand had been laid apparently lightly upon him. He had had his troubles, though his sons, it was whispered, had been somewhat expensive, as bishops’ sons frequently are ; and having appointed one of his sons his agent, he had frequently cause to complain that he could get no information whatever about his landed property ; for his youngest son’s rule in Cornwall was very despotic, and his usual threat was to turn Dissenter if he didn’t get matters his own way.

‘ He looks a good ten years younger than I do,’ said the Colonel ; ‘ and how upright for a man of our time of life ! And he knows it too,’ said the Colonel.

Here he referred to a little anecdote then current. The good Bishop had been told by the parish clerk of a neighbouring church that his lordship's son had just been there. 'His face isn't unlike you'rn, but you're much the up-righterer walking gentleman of the two.'

The Bishop made another little tack across the flower-garden, apparently composing a charge to himself.

'What a complexion, and what teeth! I should like to change livers with him; mine is sadly out of fettle, as they say.'

The Bishop put his helm hard aport, and made another tack, and caught sight of the Colonel, who tried hard to persuade the Bishop to mount the box, and go to Boddington with him, assuring him that the road was almost one long green lane the whole way, and that they would not meet a human creature in all probability.

So the Bishop, sorely against his will, and by the lure of some very rare and beautiful china to be bought cheap at Boddington, was induced to promise to go part of the way on the box, as he had much to talk to the Colonel about; and Gawaine went inside.

They had not proceeded far before they saw a white donkey standing by the hedge side.

'Look,' said the Bishop, 'is not that my old friend, the Conyers rabbit?'

'Aye! nasty brute!' cried the Colonel, very snap-pishly, for he had his own reasons for not appreciating the joke; but, being a man of infinite humour, though of a heavy style, he turned off, by shouting to Gawaine that there was a brother of his coming, who started up at once, thoroughly taken in; however, he took it very quietly, merely observing,

'No brother of mine, Colonel, only an acquaintance — just like yourself.'

‘Humph!’ grunted the Colonel; ‘an *acquaintance*!’

But the Conyers rabbit apparently felt it incumbent upon himself to support the Colonel in his visitation. On he cantered gallantly with his head well down and ears back, immediately in front of the leaders, snapping at some invisible opponent from time to time, and indulging in that extraordinary gyral movement of the tail, peculiar to the asinine tribe, apparently indicative of hugeous satisfaction.

The leaders snorted and appeared disposed to turn back; that, of course, could not be thought of. The Colonel quickened their speed, and the rabbit quickened *his* in proportion; the canter became a slow gallop, but without effect, the Conyers rabbit kept half a dozen lengths ahead easily. What was to be done? The Colonel pulled up short, so did the rabbit.

‘What is to be done with this vexatious brute?’ said the Colonel. ‘Here, you, John and Thomas, jump down and drive him away.’

Not the least use in the world! The rabbit easily kept a few lengths ahead; they could not get near him. They stopped—so did he. What was to be done? So the two mounted the rumble, and the Colonel drove on, keenly alive to the absurdity of driving with an outrider through Boddington.

‘This,’ said the Bishop, ‘affords a very good illustration of the necessity of tact. As I was observing to Gawaine the other day, a young clergyman goes into a parish; the first thing he does is to attack all who differ from him; he tries to *drive* them, and they bitterly oppose him, stir up everybody against him, and make his life miserable. Another throws himself into the arms of the Nonconforming party, merges his own existence, as it were, in theirs, and finding that he cannot conscientiously go to

the lengths they do, feels bound to oppose them ; but has fallen from his position, finds himself ever in the background, and all his best endeavours harassed and impeded. Another, having a true sense of his own position, takes his own course, and walks steadily in the path he has chosen, never willingly giving offence to any, but sticking to his principles ; kind and courteous to all, though making no undue sacrifice of principles, speaking of persons in a spirit of charity and forbearance, delighting not in useless opposition, but choosing the fittest time for any necessary changes.'

' Now, Colonel, pull up at the next gate by the roadside. That will do. Now, Thomas get over, and then through the hedge, by the cross roads, about a hundred yards off. Head him just before he passes you. And you, John, just follow him quietly till he gets to the cross roads, and then make a dash at him.

' Capital !' observed the Bishop. ' Now, I will take the opportunity of representing an inside passenger, as we are close to Boddington, and I have no wish to be described in the next edition of " Noncompomentist " as " tooling my four thoroughbreds with apostolical simplicity !! "'

So the Colonel pulled up, and the Bishop descended into the lower regions, in plain English, he occupied the back seat of the barouche ; and at his request the Colonel drove up to the Rectory.

It was a fine old red-brick house, of the reign of George the First, standing in its own grounds. The house was, in the judgment of many, not good enough for the living, which was a valuable one, considerably above 1000*l.* a year. Just one of those old-fashioned parsonage-houses which it does one's heart good to see. Four very long sash-windows, some eight feet in height on the ground-floor ; the same number on the first-floor ; then the steep

pitched tiled roof, with its dormer windows and stacks of curiously-twisted chimneys; the front was one mass of crimson roses, which ran up to the eaves of the roof. In front of the house was a grass terrace, which ran round three sides of the house. You entered from the side, through a long corridor, which landed you at the fine old staircase of dark oak, which, with its short square pillars, supporting round balls, formed rather a striking feature of the small hall, or rather vestibule. Two or three long swords, which had been dug up in the neighbourhood; an old cross-bow, which he had met with in London, and which he valued chiefly for its quaint carving; two or three old pictures of the Lely school, as faded in tint as the originals had ever been in character, hung upon the walls. A fine tiger-skin, which Captain King had presented him with, in (as it was asserted in the neighbourhood) an unwonted spirit of generosity; but we ourselves have no doubt whatever that he had, in one way or another, value received.

So the party entered the drawing-room, where they were received by Mrs. Churchill, the Rector's wife, a ladylike person. She was rather tall, dressed plainly in black satin. There was something very pleasing in her manner; a degree of quiet humour in her countenance. But there was that calmness and composure of expression, when her features were in a state of repose, indicative of many sorrows experienced, which had chastened and subdued a once lively disposition, as she had once expressed it to a friend, that before they had come to Boddington they had lived a somewhat eventful life. Having property abroad, they had been compelled many times to cross the Atlantic. Twice had they been shipwrecked; once chased by pirates. On one occasion their ship took fire; and, on their coming to Boddington, when

they had supposed that their troubles were well nigh over, their last remaining child, a beloved daughter of nineteen, was taken from them.

Dr. Churchill was a very slight, active-looking man of about ten years older than his wife. He had evidently once been handsome. Many would have called him so now, with his snow-white hair. He had still very fine white teeth. He had long known the Bishop. Indeed they had been college friends. He had quite lost sight of him for many years. He had met him, and renewed his former acquaintance with him, however, a few years ago, just as the odd way one continually tumbles over old friends and acquaintances (clearly proving that the world cannot be so large as they say it is), and the Bishop had presented him to Boddington.

‘Well,’ said the Colonel, ‘and how do you like my church?’

‘I really cannot say,’ replied his friend. ‘I am rather an indifferent walker, and cannot say that I have yet been so far.’

‘Indeed. Well, I am determined to have your opinion upon the subject. And I don’t think that Mrs. Churchill and yourself could do better than accompany us.’

‘With all my heart,’ said Mrs. Churchill. ‘I think that it will do Henry good. He has been out of sorts of late. Moreover, he has a church-rate impending; and there is likely to be a violent opposition to the rate; and he is not now as he once was. I hope, Colonel Conyers, that you will come and support him. Major Algernon has, I fancy, a vote as well as yourself?’

‘Well,’ said Colonel Conyers, ‘I will certainly come, and will try to bring Algernon; but I can’t promise. Wasn’t there something about *Hercules and Omphale*?’

So off they drove.

The new church looked most picturesque. All was completed externally up to the roof. In an old ruin much is there that reminds one of a calm and peaceful old age. The storms of life over; all disquietude at an end; waiting rather to be released from life than apprehending any sudden and violent change; "where voices are low, and the sound of grasshoppers a burden." The unfinished church with the delicate tracery of its windows, with all their pristine beauty: the capitals of the pillars; the simulated ivy, with its graceful leaves and berries; or the delicate maple, with its slender branches weaving themselves round the chapiters, with all the sharpness of outline left by the chisel and elaborateness of finish. The pillars standing out on their tall bases, before the floors have been laid down, giving the idea of boldness and strength, indicate youth, with its hope and promise of a glorious future. And so it appeared to the Bishop.

So the Colonel and Dr. Churchill strolled off together.

'Do you seriously expect any violent opposition to the church-rates?'

'Why, yes, I do,' said his friend. 'As you are aware, there is now in the land an exceedingly well-organised opposition; they have their head quarters in London. There is a certain Sir Ezekiel Storton, who has some property in the town, who is rather a great man amongst them.'

'Indeed,' said the Colonel. 'But do you find that the best Dissenters are so bitterly opposed to the Church?'

'Well, I can't say that I think so. Many of our orthodox Dissenters, as they are called (of course a contradiction in terms), look upon the Church as their great bulwark against infidelity. Those men who are utterly without religion, and are in league with the Jesuits, would do all they can to bring about a spiritual despotism. Have you seen the string of questions sent down

by a certain society in London about church-rates? Here it is, if you haven't.'

'Well,' said Dr. Churchill, 'I don't see much in them. Question 10, for instance: "*Can you find anything in Holy Scripture to sanction such a system? Does it not say, 'Every man, as he hath purposed in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver?'*"'

'Ah, indeed,' said the Colonel. 'I think there is something in the Bible about rendering custom to whom *custom* is due. A man *pays* church-rates. If an honest man, cheerfully; if a dishonest man, "grudgingly, and of necessity." At the most he pays what is due; at best, an unprofitable servant.'

'Well, now for 11. "*Is that the spirit in which people, and especially Nonconformists, pay their church-rates?'*"'

'If it isn't,' said the Colonel, 'it ought to be. At the same time, I can understand many of them looking at this payment through a distorted medium.'

'Now, then, for question 12: "*Can you justify the employment of physical force to make men contribute to a religious object?'*"

'If physical force be required to make men pay their church-rates, it is on the same principle that physical coercion is employed to make men pay police rates, highway rates, or poor rates. A member of the Peace Society may as well object to pay State taxes, which provide for war; or a man, bed-ridden, to pay highway rates, as a Dissenter to refuse to pay church-rates, because he does not approve the form of worship existing in that church.'

'"Question 13: *Does it seem to you to be reasonable or consistent with the spirit of Christianity?'*"

'Most decidedly!

'"Question 14: *Do you think that Jesus Christ ever*

meant that his religion should be supported by means of magistrates, brokers, policemen, and gaolers, by seizing men's goods, or imprisoning men's persons?"

‘We are commanded in the Gospel to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake. And it sanctions “governors;” governors who are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and the reward of them who do well. And we look upon them as evildoers, who won’t pay their just debts. We do not see how evildoers are to be punished without the co-operation of magistrates, policemen, and gaolers.

““ Question 15. *Is that the way to make non-Episcopalians respect or love your Church?*”

‘Perhaps not,’ said the Colonel. ‘Perhaps it would not tend to make them love her the more. But as nothing less than downright spoliation will please some of the Nonconformist party, I do not think that it could tend to make them love her less than they do already.’

‘Have you read the replies to the committee of the House of Lords in answer to their questions?’ said Dr. Churchill. ‘You will there find that nothing short of downright confiscation will satisfy them. I have the whole evidence. You can get the same by applying to the office at the Houses of Parliament. It will cost you only three or four shillings. I have marked out some dozen questions and answers, which are well worthy of your notice. But we will look the paper over after luncheon, which you will find at the Rectory on your return.’

‘Much obliged; much obliged! I don’t care much about luncheon myself; but our good friend, the Bishop, is in rather a delicate state of health,’ observed the Colonel with a grin, ‘and needs support. I think there is just one more question to answer. Shall I read it? Very well.

““ Question 16: *Are irreligious men likely to think any better of religion when they see it maintained by what they*

consider injustice and oppression? Is it not, in fact, the way to make them hate the very name of religion, of ministers, and of churches?"

‘What do you think of that?’ said the Colonel.

‘Well, of all the weak arguments, that appears the weakest of the set. Is the evil one, through his ministers, wicked men, more likely to attack a *pure* religion, or an *impure* one? Which is to be most dreaded by his kingdom? Which religion is most attacked by the world at large? Is not Dissent the favourite with the world? is it not petted and encouraged by all political parties? They talk about their being persecuted for righteousness and the Gospel. Is it possible that they can believe this themselves? Few things surprise me now-a-days. I confess that this does! Mind, I am speaking of them as a party. I know many individuals, whose excellence is only equalled by their total ignorance of the facts of the case, or, rather, the points in dispute. Before long every clergyman will have to follow the example of his Dissenting friends, and turn agitators, just as their ministers do. It is now avowed, that even the unconditional abolition of church-rates will not content them; that even if this were granted it would merely be looked upon as one step towards the total confiscation of all the endowments of the Church of England, all its emoluments and dignities. “Why,” as a Dissenting minister inquired a short time ago in one of the Manchester papers, “why are the ministers of the Establishment to take precedence of the Nonconformist ministers when many of the latter can construe the Greek Testament as well as the ministers of the Establishment?” There is an amount of quaint simplicity about the remark which amused me much when I read it.’

‘The noisy brawlers, who term themselves Liberators, have so filled the land with their tumult,’ observed the

Colonel, 'that they have induced people to believe, not only the ignorant, in whom it might be excusable, but even some of the members of her Majesty's Government, that the feeling of the country is opposed to these rates, and that their unconditional abolition must be at once granted. I do not exactly know,' continued he, 'in how many parishes they have been refused.'

'That I can give you,' said Dr. Churchill, 'five per cent., five out of every hundred, there are some twelve thousand parishes in England, in some two thousand of which there are endowments for the repairs of the Church; or the resident landlord, as is the case with some of our principal nobility, pays all expenses; or a church-rate has been granted after a poll, but not collected, as has been the case in one or two instances. Of a very great many parishes, no facts relative to the collection of rates has been given. But the Dissenters, with all their agitating, have, according to their own showing, been unable to effect the refusal of a rate, in even five hundred parishes. The exact number given is under five hundred. If my memory serve me, it is four hundred and fifty. It was proved before the Committee of the House of Lords, that the great mass of the religious Dissenters do not desire their abolition. The Wesleyans, for instance. Those parishes in which the rate was refused were in populous places, where party feeling ran high; and the hall or room where the meeting was held was, in many cases, packed beforehand with a mob of Irish Roman Catholics, none of them ratepayers. You have never seen one of our public meetings, have you?'

'No, certainly not.'

'Then I should advise you to be present at one; it will be something new to you.'

'How do you manage at Conyers Lea?'

'Why, as I let all my farms tithe free, it saves a great

deal of trouble, and I pay all expenses myself. In some respects I look upon it as a great advantage. When one man is answerable for the whole rate which his property pays, he will look more closely into the rate.

‘Gawaine was giving me a description of the rate-book which was brought him in his late parish: so much paid for destroying small birds and vermin, so much in beer for the ringers, dinners so much, &c. Everything which could not be legally charged for was foisted upon the church-rate,—one hundred and odd dozen of wine,*—a jolly time those old-fashioned churchwardens and poor-law guardians must have had of it! I now pay the whole of the rate, and I see that nothing is misappropriated. The poor old General allowed them to do much as they pleased. The highway rates were almost fabulous. The tenants were in the habit of placing all their straw in the roads, to make into manure. The roads were impassable for half the year, during the winter months, and as bad as could be in the summer.

‘So they put me in waywarden. I gave them fair warning, pointed out to them the folly of collecting heavy rates, spending with one hand, and stealing with the other. Moreover, too, they had a bad plan of employing a few poor old men, quite past their work, on the penny wise and pound foolish principle. Poor fellows! they could do little. I found it far cheaper to hire some young active men on good wages. The work was then well done. Another trick they had was sweeping the road; I mean to say, scraping up the mud into heaps by the wayside, each farmer claiming those mud heaps which abutted on his farm. That I soon put a stop to. They soon appointed me to the whole district. I gave them fair warning, and one fine day, just as the straw

* A fact.

on the road having become thoroughly decomposed, was becoming good manure, I sent round a dozen carts, early in the morning, had it valued, sold the whole of it to the highest bidder, and credited the amount received to the highway rate. Such a scene as never was known. I then sent for several hundred tons of flints, had them broken small; and now there is such a road to the station as has not its match anywhere.'

'Pray have you far to go to the station?'

'A few miles merely.'

'Is that a gentle insinuation that I put the road into working condition for my sole use?' observed the Colonel, with a quiet smile.

'Well, *not exactly*, as our old friend the Baron used to say.'

'Poor old Kroëdnerr,' said the Colonel; 'do you remember how full of life and fun he was at Lord Millington's, when he *would* run a race with Emily, and was compelled to stop short after the first thirty yards?'

'I remember his making a bet of fifty pounds with Millington that he could not be taken in by any dish, and Millington and myself sewing a woodcock's head on an owl, and the poor old Baron declaring it delicious, till he unfortunately discovered a mouse in the trail! We at first tried an old crupper, well stewed down with turtle, and called it sturgeon; but he found us out at once.'

'Will our friends' sons play such tricks on us!!'

'Well,' said the Bishop to Mrs. Churchill, as they strolled round the beautiful fragment. 'I fancy that my old friend is building this church as a sort of memorial of a dear daughter. I am very glad that he has done so. It is one of those things which, sooner or later, brings a blessing with them.'

'Yes,' replied Mrs. Churchill, 'he will value it because he has built it. Because he values it, he will

have his mind more attuned to holy things; and their insensible influence will not be without increasing effect. These works become blessed to us in their using, and they are a proof to ourselves that we are not altogether eye-servants. They quicken our perceptions of things unseen. Our love and charity, and the prayers we put up, and the blessings which we receive in answer to them, appear to me as the angels ascending and descending on Jacob's ladder.'

'Humph!' said the Bishop. 'Per—haps so!'

'Pray, Colonel Conyers,' observed Mrs. Churchill, 'are you acquainted with the Rector of Barrington?'

'Oh, yes, I know him very well!'

'Don't you think that you would like to pay him a call on our return; it is not very far round. Do you know the place well?'

'Tolerably; I have a farm there, the Home Lees.'

'Ah! is your tenant a man of the name of Robinson?'

'Do you know anything of him?'

'Well, many years ago there was a pretty young girl, the orphan daughter of a neighbouring farmer who had died — some relation of Robinson. Well, she was missed suddenly one day. Robinson professed to know nothing about the matter. Her body was found some days after. Being rather an out-of-the-way place, and the poor child having no friends, there was no one to take steps to have the matter investigated. Some foul play was suspected on Robinson's part, and he left the neighbourhood for some time. Went, I believe, to America, and then he married.'

'Indeed. I heard nothing of that.'

'I assure you that it is perfectly true!'

'Well, Gawaine told me that the man was a rascal. He was once Algernon's tenant, who got rid of him.'

So they started for Barrington. Every house in the village was closed, and on their advancing farther they saw a funeral slowly wending its way towards the church.

‘Well,’ said Gawaine, ‘I never before saw such a concourse of people. And look; the churchyard is filled also. Who can it be? I trust it is not my old friend Mr. Stratton. No, there he is,’ as a tall, portly man advanced in his surplice to meet the corpse.

‘Well, suppose we drive on slowly to the Rectory.’

In a short time Mr. Stratton joined them.

‘What an extraordinary gathering,’ exclaimed the Colonel, ‘you have had to-day!’

‘Yes; it has been, indeed, a very solemn, a very awful event. A farmer of the name of Robinson.’

‘Of the Home Lees!’ exclaimed the Colonel.

‘Yes. Your tenant, I believe, was in the field preparing to carry his second hay harvest; the first had been a very light crop.’

‘The scoundrel!’ exclaimed the Colonel, ‘he was bound by his lease to *feed* the after-grass.’

‘Well, his hay was fit to carry, when suddenly the sky became overcast, a brilliant flash of lightning was seen in the distance, a few drops of rain fell, and the atmosphere was fast assuming that lurid violet colour, indicative of a very heavy storm!’

“Well, Farmer,” said one of his men, “your crop is as good as spoilt.”

‘So Robinson turned round, and with a horrible imprecation, swore that the Almighty shouldn’t spoil all his hay, and taking up some off the ground, stuffed it into his breeches pocket. An old man reproved him, and he threatened to make him rot in the workhouse.’

‘Presently the sun broke forth from behind some clouds, throwing a sickly glare through the huge oak-trees which

bordered the meadow, casting their gnarled and twisted shadows upon the ground. They hurried to take shelter. Robinson would not join them, but stood in the middle of the field as if *dazed*, as one of the men expressed it. They called to him, but he took no notice of them, and set off homewards. Late at night his poor wife came to me in sad distress; her husband had not returned home, and there were the most extraordinary stories afloat in the village. One had seen him dashing wildly off on an enormous beast, as large as an elephant, somewhat like a huge white rabbit (the Colonel fidgeted uneasily in his seat). "Ah," said one of the men, "he was sent after the *hay*." I went out into the village; the rain had somewhat abated. I persuaded his wife that he had perhaps met with a friend, and they were passing a congenial evening at some pot-alehouse. The poor woman was somewhat comforted; but when several days had passed, I became somewhat uneasy, and sending for the men, I inquired which way he had gone, they said, "Straight to his *house*, so far as they could see." Well, we went all of us to the field; for, as the man must have been thoroughly drenched, I agreed with them in thinking that this must have been the case. Well, we all set off for his house. The road, after a certain time, wound round two sides of a field. "Is there not a short cut across here?" said I. "There was," said one of the men, "till master stopped it up, drat him. He threatened to make me rot in the workhouse, he did." "Hush!" said I, "he may be even now in the presence of his Maker." The men shuddered! "Over, lads," cried I. We got over the hedge. "Here he is," cried one of the men in an awe-struck tone. There, in a deep ditch, sat Robinson, his back against the bank, resting partly on his side. One of them drew something out of the *dead man's* pocket, *it was a handful of rotting hay!!!* In his breast-

pocket was a note-case, containing a large sum in notes; he had in another pocket, in his waistband, a canvas bag of sovereigns! ”*

‘ Ah!’ said the Colonel, and he told him the story of Robinson and the Conyers rabbit.

‘ Well, Dr. Churchill,’ observed the Rector of Barrington, ‘ you are likely to have rather a stormy affair at Boddington; shall you carry your church-rate?’

‘ Well, I shall carry it well enough; but there will be a tough fight for it. I do not care so much about collecting it afterwards. A great deal of jealousy and heart-burning will be caused by the contest; but I look upon it as a duty to make a fight for it whenever it is possible.’

‘ Well, I think that you are right. To you, with all the wealth of Boddington, the carrying of a church-rate is neither here nor there; but what will become of the small rural parishes in which the squire is a Romish or Protestant dissenter, or an infidel?’

‘ Bad enough,’ replied his friend; ‘ but you are quite wrong, if you think that it matters *nothing* whether a rate be collected or not.’

‘ Now,’ said Colonel Conyers, ‘ I don’t know whether you are guilty of the bad habit of having Christmas bills. Now, those of us who are sinners in this respect, we look them over, tie them up, put down the “tottle of the whole,” as our old friend terms it; and a fifty-pound note extra in the whole amount is neither here nor there. We growl and pay it, and then it is over; so it is with a church-rate: we pay a certain sum; well, and perhaps we growl a little. Well, that is the odd fifty. We have then our charities besides. Those, I trust, we pay willingly; at least, I do. Now, if the Parson has to collect

* The above story is literally true, and was related to the author by the rector of the parish, a very influential clergyman in Somersetshire, immediately after the funeral, some seven or eight years ago.

a voluntary church-rate ! Well, one gives what one thinks right ; then comes a visit for a Missionary Society, next comes the school, then comes a small sum for the Mutual Improvement, next comes the S. P. C. K., then the Hospital. Why the clergyman's whole time is taken up running about hither and thither, and my hand is everlastingly in my breeches pocket. I have the greatest regard for our Rector ; but if he should never make his appearance without the begging-box, I had rather he put a pistol to my head. Damocles and his sword were a mere joke compared with it. How does it answer amongst our Dissenting friends ? (You need not grin, Gawaine ; I don't look upon them, or hold them up as perfect.) How do your Dissenting *brethren* manage ?

'Cousins-german,' quietly observed Gawaine.

'Well, call them what you please,' said he. 'They have not rates.'

'Well, but the rich men of the congregation are put down for a certain amount — they are turned out if recalcitrant.'

'Well, Gawaine,' said he, 'what is the difference between this and a rate ?'

'It reminds me,' said Gawaine, 'of the voluntary theological examination at Cambridge, which one *must* pass before being ordained.'

'Exactly,' said the Colonel. 'I don't quite know,' observed he, 'when the first systematic opposition to church-rates took place ; but I don't think it can be very long ago.'

The Bishop smiled. He was somewhat amused at the Colonel's coming out so strongly upon the church-rate question. He was evidently arguing with all his heart.

'Church-rates,' said the Bishop, 'were never imposed BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT, except by the Puritans, in Cromwell's days ; they have always been imposed by the MAJORITY of the ratepayers.'

The Colonel, it must be confessed, would argue just for the sake of arguing, on the side of the question quite opposed to his real feelings, especially when roused by Gawaine. Indeed, one of his own tenants (the miserable Robinson, who had just met with so terrible a fate) had told him publicly that he had *two faces*, just like Boddington clock. Whereupon, the Colonel, who did not want a certain quickness of repartee, quietly observed, that '*they both told the same tale*,' which retort was rapturously applauded by the mob, with whom the Colonel was rather a favourite!!

'That date, I can, I think, furnish you with,' said he; 'it was somewhere about the year 1830. A political union was formed in Birmingham for the sake of promoting Parliamentary reform. They found it desirable to avail themselves of some of the local interests of the town. And, as the church-rate was an annual subject of contention, not as to the facts of granting a rate, but as to the amount of the rate when granted, the members of the political council gladly ranged themselves on the sides of the opponents of the rate; but, raising a strong party feeling, they managed to elect a churchwarden pledged to oppose the granting of a rate. This was in 1832. So fierce was the contest, that very many churchmen, for the sake of peace and quietness, did not go to the poll, and so the rate was lost. The Church is an integral part of the constitution of this country; what guarantee have we that if one part of the Constitution be overturned, the other will not follow? Now, church-rates are the only external payment made in supporting the Church. And if the Church were overturned, the Crown would not be worth many years' purchase. The tithes and the glebelands are the property of the clergy, as a corporation; and if these be seized upon, the Crown will next follow. By the coronation oath, the rights and revenues of the

Established Church are to be defended. Unscrupulous men have falsely declared that the Church in this country is in a minority, and that it represents only one-third of the population. Never was a more *glaring falsehood told*. The '51 census proves that seventy-eight per cent. of the children of the land are educated in schools in connexion with the Church of England; and the registration of marriages proves that eighty-four per cent. take place in the churches of the Established Church. And the Dissenters used all their influence to have the religious clause struck out of the census of 1861, fearing lest the truth should be known.'

'Well!' observed Colonel Conyers, 'figures are convincing things, certainly; and I can say in all sincerity with what's his name, "thank God, we have a House of Lords." If we *lose*, it will be by the supineness of churchmen, lay and clerics. We have too many men of fortune in the Church, who look upon the whole affair as doomed; having small preferment and large private fortunes, they consider that there will be bread and cheese for them when the Rads sweep the Church away with the besom of destruction. "It will last my time," say they. Well, I am an old fellow myself, but perhaps in *my* time landed property may go also. But if I have the chance, I'll make the old castle too hot to hold any of them. I detest dissent and Dissenters from the bottom of my heart.'

'Entirely the fault of your order,' coolly observed the Bishop. 'If a manufacturer buy a fine place in your neighbourhood, and settles down there; he may be a very good fellow; he does not, it is true, date from William the Norman; perhaps, clips the Queen's English; his wife, it may be, copies his example. Now, I am putting as strong a case as possible. His daughters are, in nine cases out of ten, lady-like, well-educated girls; but you all tip the family the cold shoulder, and then you wonder

that they associate with the Baptist solicitor and the Independent surgeon; worship at the conventicle, where ministers, deacons, and exorcists are prepared to perform the grand kootoo wheresoever and whensoever it may be required!! They come to be bitter enemies to Church and State, Queen and Constitution; and you have to thank yourselves for it. Why did you treat that Birmingham man in the way you all did? (By-the-bye, I must except your family.)' It is true that at his own house he had a playful way of taking his wife's arm, and walking in to dinner, leaving his guests to pair off and follow at their discretion.

'Well, he was not much in my line,' observed the Colonel; 'but I was quite prepared to be civil to him; and actually went so far as to recommend one of his daughters to Millington! But joking apart, there is a certain amount of truth in what you say. We certainly do neglect to strengthen our party, and tend to drive them into the enemy's camp.'

'Now,' continued the Bishop, 'it has been asserted that the Dissenters provide an equal number of sittings with ourselves. A fabulous assertion, truly. Even if this were the case, we must deduct from this number the Wesleyans connected with the Conference, who are prepared to support the Church of England; and then how many remain? The Baptists provide four per cent. of the sittings; and repudiating, as they do, the authority of the Old Testament with reference to baptism, of course it was to be expected that they would repudiate the principle of an Established Church. Now, the Independents, who represent six per cent. of the sittings, band themselves together with these in their attack on the Church, but are bitterly opposed to them on the baptismal question. And the Baptists refuse to communicate with

the Independents: I mean partake of the Lord's Supper with them. Do you think that they could supply the place of the Church of England if she were disestablished to-morrow? I trow not! The other sects of Dissenters, Roman Catholics, Socinians, Calvinistic Methodists, &c. Now these, altogether, provide some five per cent., making a total of fifteen per cent. I deduct, you observe, the Wesleyan Methodists connected with the Conference. And here we have some fifteen per cent. of the population, including men, women, and children, opposed to the Establishment of the Church of England. Take the heads of families, we shall have some three per cent. only who can parade the new objection of conscience.'

'By-the-bye,' said Gawaine, who had, contrary to his wont, been listening in silence for some time, 'an interesting fact was communicated to me by one of the committee of laymen the other day. Some years ago the King of Tahiti was converted, owing to the labours in his dominions of one Mr. Nott, a missionary of the Independents. He acknowledged God in all his ways. Public transactions took place, with a solemn recognition of Christianity. The missionary was practically Prime Minister; and at the coronation of Pomare he performed the part of our Archbishop of Canterbury. The facts were mentioned at a meeting of leading Independent Ministers at which I was present, "When I remarked," said my friend —

' "Why, gentlemen, this looks like an Established Church."

' "Very like it, indeed," said the late excellent Dr. Wardlaw. Now, what do you think of that?'

'Why I think,' observed the Colonel, 'that the horses have been standing some time, and that we have, moreover, no time to lose.'

CHAPTER XV.



O off they drove to the Rectory at Boddington; and, after luncheon, proceeded to inspect the collection of shells, &c., the fruits of many years' toil.

'Dear me,' said the Bishop, as he proceeded to examine somewhat closely an extraordinary-looking shell. 'Surely this is unique!'

'Well, I fancy so,' said Dr. Churchill. 'Bingland says so, and has advised me to call it after my own name. I was somewhat puzzled. First, I thought of terming it *conchus ecclescliffii*. Then I thought of one thing, then of another. At last I have decided on calling it *conchus Petri*, which quite gives you the idea, in my humble opinion.'

'Entirely,' observed the Colonel; 'and a mighty pretty name, too. *Conchus Petri*! Yes, exactly; just the thing! You have, of course, forwarded a description to the savans! What on earth do you call that piece of pink spar?'

'Pink spar, indeed. That is an Irish amethyst, and a very fine one, too, indeed. By-the-bye, I heard a curious story when I was last in Ireland, touching those said amethysts. A man of the name of Roche held a small property conjointly with a man of the name of Mitchel. They were having a well sunk, when Roche saw some of these things (what do you call them? Amethysts) thrown out. I don't mean to state that the event happened when I was myself in Ireland; but it happened about the time of the introduction of Methodism into the

favoured land. Roche picked up one of the amethysts and put it into his pocket. In the evening he went to show it to friend who was fond of polishing pebbles, and had a fair amount of knowledge. He pronounced it to be an amethyst, and supposed it to be of immense value. Roche thought that their fortune was made, so he rushed off to consult Mitchel, whose house was some miles from the lapidary's. He arrived there about midnight, and finding knocking at Mitchel's door quite useless, began to throw gravel up at the window. Presently the window opened, and a short gun was protruded, followed by a truculent head, crowned with a scarlet worsted nightcap.

““ Mitchel, come down and open the door. Make haste, man alive! don't keep me shivering here in the cowl. Shure our fortune's made entirely! It's yourself that's the lucky man this blessed night. The well is full of METHODYSTS.”

““ Arrah, have done with your blarney, or by this blessed book,” said he, kissing the barrel of his gun, “I'll drop a shot into ye!”

““ Tare-an'-ages, man, it's true as Gospel every word I'm spaking to you. Shure I've got one of them in my pocket.”

““ Bedad, then, sir, I'll be after ye this blessid minit. Bad luck to ye, then, and the Methodys, for a stupid baste that ye are, ye drunken divole. Be off with ye, or may ——”

“What he would have said is lost to history; for the gun went off at this juncture, a heavy charge of slugs passing over his head, and a lighted piece of greased rag fell on his caubeen, to which it set fire.

““ Och, wirra! wirra! I'm a murdered man; and I'll leave my death at your door, Barney Mitchel. The big curse be on you; the curse of a dying man, Barney

Mitchel. Shure the slugs is like red-hot iron in my brain pan. Shure I'm burnt alive. I'm dying by inches. Man alive, I'm murdered entirely. And it's many a pleasant night ye'll have, Barney, when my body is lying in the cowl'd churchyard, and my ghost is sitting fornenst ye, at your bed head, drinking your punch, maybe, and tormenting you. Thiggum, thu, do you hear that, you desaver, you! And there you sit grinning up there, you big blackguard, as if you was divarted entirely to see me, with my brains scattered about on the doorpost, and the inside of me skull ironed with a flat-heater. It's mighty little you'll grin when you are dancing on nothing avick! and dressed as smart as a parson; and maybe it's a speech you'll be making to the boys, alanna! Not to shoot a poor boy, who finds Methodists in your well, and makes you a fortune. Shure I'm in purgatory entirely, for I smell the singeing, and I'll have it all entirely burnt out of me."

'At this moment his hat blew off, and for the time relieved him from his apprehensions. And so he went home anathematising his friend, who could not see the value of a well full of *methodists*.'

'A capital story,' observed the Bishop, 'and mighty well up you appear to be in your Irish. What do you mean by a caubeen? Moreover, Gawaine tells me that you are rather a Methodist in heart yourself; that you build and endow a church; and then endeavour to undo your work again by contributing largely to a Methodist meeting-house in your own neighbourhood. Now no man is more utterly opposed than myself to that habit some men get into of always attacking their dissenting neighbours. I of course think them, and conscientiously believe them to have in certain things fallen into grievous error; but I do not see what good is done by incessantly attack-

ing them ; but this is a very different thing from furnishing them with funds to oppose us. I respect our dissenting friends, for many reasons, especially the Wesleyans, and probably before very many years, they will, wearied of their internal dissensions, return to the Church. I shall not see it, but you may. They will soon find that true religious freedom is only to be found in the Church, just as in Great Britain and its dependencies alone can true political freedom be found. In America a man dares not express his opinions hostile to the notions of the mob ; or if he be a man of unusual courage he holds his own, speaks his opinions like a man, is furnished by the mob with means of transport out of the country ; in plain language, is ridden on a rail.'

'And clothed,' observed the Colonel, 'in a light and picturesque travelling costume, which, though suitable enough for a bird, is quite out of character in the *bipes implume*. In sad and sober earnest it disgusts me to hear men prating about freedom in America ; it is a delusion, a hollow lie, and a snare ; there is no such thing, there never was, and I fear it will be long before there ever will be. Talk of the Puritan Fathers indeed, there never was such intolerance, such grinding, iron-fisted tyranny known ; never was such lip worship, such starchness of outward demeanour, combined with the general practice of secret lasciviousness.'

'I quite agree with you,' observed Dr. Churchill. 'By-the-bye (to fly off at a tangent), I should like you to inspect the new infant school ; Mrs. Churchill has gone to put her things on, and will go with you.'

'Which means,' observed the Colonel, 'that you want a quiet talk with my friend, the Bishop ; here very well ; but to continue my first remark. Nowhere is there real religious liberty except in the Church. Have the Dis-

senters no involuntary contributions? Let any man refuse to pay what is set down as his share, and they turn him out of the congregation at once.

‘ Nowhere is religion so truly free: never does she lay heavy burdens on men’s backs; her fold is indeed comprehensive, her government elastic; she is not tied to any one mode of raising the necessary funds: here the parish church with its ample endowments; here the suburban church with very small endowments, if any, where the congregation are bitterly opposed to anything savouring of Romanism, or suspected to savour of Romanism; here she avails herself of the apparently sole means at her disposal, and she falls back upon the system of pew-rents.

‘ Again, her lot is cast in a poor but populous district; there are many who feel the blessing of having her settled amongst them; men who have no fear of the cry of Puseyism; who look upon a Tractarian as the man who comforts and advises them in seasons of trouble and distress; they make a collection on the first day of the week, and this produces a sufficient sum for the maintenance of the minister and carrying out of the services of the church. Where would you find any other community that could exist on such apparently contradictory principles? and yet this very unlikeness is its real strength. Her very endowments were given voluntarily, and voluntarily established or placed under the protection of the State, that they might be ensured to those who succeeded to them. They therefore established them, they made them firm, stable, and they trusted *lasting* as the eternal hills. And under our present system is true liberty preserved to the Church, both to the clergy and laity. The clergy are not enslaved, for a beneficed clergyman of the Church of England is dependant on no man. The laity are not enslaved, for the first object of an establishment, and one

of its noblest results in this country, is to protect the public from any undue influence on the part of their spiritual instructors.'

'I quite agree with you,' observed the Colonel; 'but if I am to see the school, and if you are to have your talk out with the Bishop, the sooner we start the better. Bertha, that is to say, Mrs. Gawaine Conyers, has to dress for dinner: that will take, I fancy, a good hour and a half, and Emily does not like dinner kept waiting; and if *she* did I am sure *I* should not; so I am ready for the infant school. What am I to give? for as they say in Russia when they want a fee, "You are I know, a *married* man !!!"'

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE EARLY CHURCH — TO BE MISSED BY THOSE
WHO ONLY CARE ABOUT THE STORY.

‘**I** THINK,’ said the Colonel, as they sat round the table at dessert, and he paused for a few seconds, as though to prove to his audience that the train of thought was still in action; ‘I think that had I to do the thing again, I should have had a different style of architecture for my new church.’

‘Why, my dear?’ somewhat sharply inquired his wife.

‘Why? because Gothic architecture tends to continue that prevalent opinion, that somehow we did wrong in separating from the Church of Rome. Every cathedral, every beautiful old village church, appeals to my mind in favour of a bygone faith, as though in adopting Protestantism we had, as Gawaine would say, cut ourselves off from Christendom, and something he said about communion, and — — There! well now, what is it? I do hate to see a woman with a perpetual grin on her face. I suppose you think that I have said something peculiarly absurd, just like you; but you are always doing it.’

‘But, my dear Gerald——’

‘But it is not “my dear Gerald;” — and there’s the Bishop, too, *of course*, he will take *your* view of the case; he always does. I’ll give in at once. Now, then, what is it? Something very funny, of course.’

‘ Well,’ said the Bishop, ‘ if I am to answer for myself, I was at the first rather amused at your rhapsody in favour of a sort of “ Christianity unattached.” Then about the separation from the Church of Rome; I thought that I had convinced you that we never separated from the Church of Rome. In Elizabeth’s time a very small, an infinitesimally small portion of the Church of England seceded from us, after having remained some ten or a dozen years more or less in our communion, owing to the last Papal offer to Elizabeth having been rejected. Our Church was founded by St. Paul, for 600 years independent of the Church of Rome, protesting from that time (A.D. 600) against Papal abuses; but till the seventh century (A.D. 600) the Church of England was quite independent of the Church of Rome. Certainly, the Church of Rome was consulted on doubtful points occasionally, and a certain degree of deference shown to the Bishop of Rome, but only as *primus inter pares*. Not a particle of authority over either the British or the Gallican churches was either allowed by them or claimed by the Pontiff himself. The Papal chains were, however, afterwards riveted on, though in England always resisted, and at times much broken, till at length they were entirely thrown off at the time of the Reformation. And then, in the glorious days of good Queen Bess, as you would, I suppose, term her, some five per cent. of the people (the favourers of Rome) seceded from us, from whom the present members of the Church of Rome may fairly date their origin.’

‘ There, I told you, *Gerald*, the other day, that you were wrong.’

‘ There, *Emily*, you are *always* declaring that you said this and that. You’re always doing it. You get up a subject, argue the point with one, and when you think you’ve got some one on your side, you always say, “ You

said this, and you said that." I believe you are *all* wrong.'

'As to being all wrong,' said the Bishop, 'it is a *mere matter of history*.'

'"*A mere matter of history*" that St. Paul founded the Church of England? I should like to hear you prove it, that's all. I know that Gawaine (than whom a more empty-headed fellow never walked on two legs) wanted to threep me down. *Well*, a matter of history! Drive on, then, my Lord Bishop. Now, then, what is your first stage on the great road of time? Where do you book from?'

'Well!' replied the Bishop, 'our first stage must, I suppose, be from the middle of the first century to the mission of St. Augustine, A.D. 596. The British tribes are supposed to have passed over from the shores of the Baltic, from Belgium and Gaul; but *when* I know not. Then we next come upon Druidism (from $\Delta\rho\upsilon\varsigma$, the sacred oak). We find them with solemn assemblies, presided over by their judges, the Druids (I mean the Druids were the priests and judges of the ancient British).'

'Ah, indeed,' said the Colonel, who put in a word or two when he had the opportunity, but who otherwise studiously kept up the appearance of not attending; and, as though engaged in a little roadside cribbage, put in a word or two whenever he could, and scored one accordingly. 'Ah, indeed, judges! Judge Lynch, I fancy. Priests?? A sort of Established Church of wickerwork, in which they took tithes in kind. Well! drive on, my Lord.'

'As fast as you like,' said the Bishop; 'but as the subject is a grave one, let us approach it in a serious spirit. My object is, then, to prove that St. Paul founded our Church; secondly, that in all probability there was a Christian Church in Britain even before there was a

Church at Rome; and this is acknowledged by some of the most learned and eminent of the Church of Rome,—Baronius and Suarez. Pagitt, in his “Christianography,” the third edit. published 1640, states, “By this it appeareth (from Baronius) that the Church of Rome is not our mother Church, but a sister only, and that a younger, too, howsoever her flatterers would make her mother of all churches.” Now, it must be acknowledged that there is no notice taken of St. Paul’s western travels in his Second Epistle to Timothy, but only of his eastern. But on the other hand, don’t let us forget that St. Peter, in his Epistles, takes no notice whatever of his own western travels.’

‘But, he must have been at Rome,’ said Lady Emily.

‘Why,’ said the Bishop.

‘Because it is universally acknowledged,’ said she.

‘Well; but surely,’ said the Bishop, ‘that which is boldly stated, is not to be accepted as a truth, merely from the boldness of the assertion.’

‘Why not?’ said the Colonel; ‘a certain amount of universality may amount to a certainty in the absence of the clearest proof to the contrary. You understand me.’

‘Well, I won’t call upon you for an explanation.’

‘Well, you will, at all events, grant the *vox populi* to be the *vox Dei*.’

‘You remember the reply of Southey’s sister: “Yet it cried, Crucify him! crucify him!”’

‘Now, I state boldly, that there is five times the evidence that St. Paul established the British Church, than that St. Peter was ever at Rome.’

‘What! do you mean to assert that St. Peter was never at Rome?’

‘I don’t mean to say that he might not have been executed at Rome; but though my own impression may be

in favour of the assertion, there is not a tittle of evidence to establish the truth of the assertion. We have in proof of St. Paul's travels to the west and Britain, a continued chain of evidence, link after link, from the first century up to the sixth. We, however, have nothing of St. Peter's western labours, except from Popes Innocent and Gelasius (who claimed the primacy), till *four* centuries after the latest testimony in favour of St. Paul. No doubt the merits of St. Paul were transferred to St. Peter in those dark ages of the tenth century, when frauds were committed whose piety was only equalled by their impudence.'

'Then you have your *vox populi* again, Gerald, on *your* side, I grant; but, remember, that Rome had the fine arts at her behest, and a mass of evidence, trustworthy in the judgments of those alone on whose minds statuary and sculpture had impressed it from childhood. Look at the immense influence it must have had. Now reflect how difficult it is to persuade a rustic of the absurdity of any gross falsehood and ludicrous report that may be current; he will tell you that he has "seed it *on* the paper.'"

'Ah, indeed! you might have said then, you have St. Paul's, a miniature of St. Peter's at Rome,' observed the Colonel.

'So I might, Gerald, dear; but I didn't quite see what it had to do with the matter.'

'Of course you didn't. If it had chanced to be your own remark, you WILL make your attempt at repartee, and then you flounder about in the shallows of high art, and do a little in æsthetics. Drive on, Bishop,' said the Colonel, irreverently, as he observed his friend watching the pair in their sort of amicable squabble, with a quiet smile.

'Well, Conyers, you are incorrigible. Where was I?

Oh ! about the evidence of St. Paul's being in Britain, and touching St. Peter's western travels. I grant you that a certain Greek writer says that St. Peter spent some days in Britain, and "enlightened many by the words of grace, and having established churches," &c. Now, if this had happened to be of any authority, which he is not, his assertions would have no weight whatever against St. Paul's being the establisher of the British Church. At the same time, Bishop Stillingfleet, in his "*Origines Britannice*," declares this writer to be of no authority whatever. He says, "Some writers of our Church history have endeavoured to prove St. Peter to have preached the Gospel in Britain; but their proofs are very slight and inconsiderable, and depend chiefly on the authority of Simeon Metaphrastis, or other legendary writers, or some monkish visions, or some domestic testimonies of his pretended successors, or some late partial advocates, such as Eysengreneus, who professes to follow Metaphrastes. All which together are not worth mentioning in comparison with the authors on the other side.'

'I should have been glad,' said the Colonel, 'to have heard you quote some Roman Catholic historians.'

'That may scarcely BE, Gerald. To me it would be like giving up the whole controversy at once.'

'Ah,' said the Colonel, 'that remark of yours quite illustrates the old saying, that women *feel*, but cannot *reason*.'

'Now, pray excuse me, Gerald dear ! We women certainly have our feelings. Sad would it be if we hadn't. But surely it does not follow, because men, as in the *present case*, have *no* feelings, that they are, therefore, able to *reason* at all the better in consequence.'

'When you have SETTLED that question,' observed the Bishop, 'with your permission, I will proceed. You will

find that two of the Roman Catholic writers have expressed their opinion of this writer. One, Baronius, says that he is of no authority whatever. Linguard ("Anglo-Saxon Church," vol. i. p. 3) calls him (Metaphrastes) a treacherous authority. So slight is the evidence in favour of St. Peter's ever having been in Britain; very little more to prove his having ever visited Rome. Look through, I say, the histories of the first six centuries, and you will find abundant proof, first, in the direct evidence of St. Paul's having been in Britain; secondly, from indirect evidence, derived from the propagation of Christianity in Spain and Britain, which entirely supports the testimony given *directly*.'

'I don't understand that sentence,' said the Colonel. 'Do *you*, Emily?'

'Well, I understand it clearly enough; but as your next request will be an explanation thereof, I may at once say that there is a great difference between understanding a thing and paraphrasing a statement. THAT I cannot pretend to do.'

'Clear as mud. Now, Bishop, will you proceed with your statement.'

'First, we have the testimony of Clemens Romanus, "the intimate friend and fellow-labourer of St. Paul." He says that St. Paul, in preaching the Gospel, went to the utmost bounds of the west, ἐπὶ τῷ τέρματι τῆς δύσεως. Now this was the usual expression applied to Britain. Catullus calls Britain "Ultima Britannia," and "Ultima occidentis insula." The west included Spain, Gaul, and Britain. Theodoret speaks of the inhabitants of Spain, Gaul, and Britain as dwelling in the "utmost bounds of the west." τὰς τῆς ἐσπέρας ἐσχατίας. Stillingfleet quotes other passages from the ancients to prove that the expression used was the common designation applied to Britain.

Nicephorus says *πρὸς ἐσπέριον ὠκεανὸν εἰσβαλὼν καὶ τὰς Βριτανικὰς νήσους εὐαγγελισάμενος*. The utmost bounds of the west, then, was the usual and general expression made use of when applied to Britain. Next, in the second century, (A.D. 179) Nenæus says that the Gospel had been preached in the utmost bounds of the earth *ἕως περάτων τῆς γῆς* by the Apostles and their disciples. He mentions the different churches by name, asserting that they had been founded *ἐν ταῖς Ἰβερταῖς—ἐν Κέλτοις* (in Spain and in the Celtic nations). By the Kelts, *Κέλτοι*, were meant the people of Germany, Gaul, and Britain. Second and third centuries (A.D. 193, 220), Tertullian mentions, amongst the Christian converts, “*Hispaniarum omnes termini, et Galliarum diversæ nationes, et Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo vere subdita.*” In short, the whole of Spain, all the Gallic tribes, had received the Gospel, and places which had proved inaccessible to the Romans had had been conquered for Christ. Tertullian and Lucius probably lived about the same time; and Lucius seems to have been one of the unsubdued *Reguli* of the country. Irenæus and Tertullian do not mention St. Paul by name; yet both speak of the conversion of Britain to Christianity. The planting the Gospel in Spain, and amongst the Celtic nations, is spoken of as the work of the Apostles and their disciples. “*Hesterni sumus,*” says Tertullian, “*et vestra omnia adimplevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, Palatium, Senatum, forum !!!*”

‘*Very well,*’ observed the Colonel. ‘Now I think that you have proved fairly enough that the Gospel has been planted in Britain from the earliest ages. But in the name of common honesty I must protest against cumulative evidence in favour of St. Paul. Why rob Peter to pay Paul?’

‘You always were a wit, Conyers. But do you not see that, in the first place, there is no reliable evidence whatever that St. Peter was ever in Britain — *little* that he was at Rome? We have it directly asserted that St. Paul preached the Gospel in the far west.’

‘But how do we know that they mean Britain, and that the phrases made use of were not merely rhetorical expressions?’

‘Why, we have a host of writers who use the same expression to indicate these places. First, we are told by two or three early writers that the Gospel was preached by St. Paul; and a cloud of witnesses are present to prove that Christianity was established by the Apostles and their disciples in those places at that period.’

‘This must do for this evening,’ said Lady Emily. ‘I must leave your lordship and Gerald to continue the subject, if you think proper.’

‘I think,’ said the Bishop, ‘that I must retire to my own room, as I have some writing to do which must be done to-night.’

‘And leave me alone?’ said the Colonel. ‘Well, if you will, you will; my best wishes go with both of you. Here, Tibbits, I think you said that the sample of port had arrived; just bring a bottle of it up, you know how to decant it. Eighteen shillings a bottle is rather a high price.’

‘Yes, sir; it is,’ said Tibbits; ‘but you see, sir, his lordship isn’t very often here, and though he only takes two or three glasses of port after dinner, yet he do seem to enjoy himself very much, sir; and it isn’t as if the wine was wasted: a different thing from young gentlemen, sir: his lordship doesn’t say anything, sir; but he takes his wine slowly, very little of it; but as if he knew

what it was. Now, young gentlemen, sir, they fill their glasses very full, and they look at the colour with the light through it, and they say it isn't full-bodied, and is too tawny for them. I like to see a gentleman take his wine quietly, as if he knew what was what.'

'Ah, Tibbits, the times are much changed now! In our younger days enough wine was drunk at mess in one night to last the regiment a week of these degenerate days. You and I, Tibbits, have witnessed strange scenes; God forbid that they should return. Young men drink little in these days; but they talk the wine to death. Defend me from the cant of criticism: they drink less, but they understand more about the matter.'

'Yes, sir; young gentlemen very knowing, sir. Master Charles's young gentlemen from Eton——

'“Here, Tibbits; a little champagne: you're getting quite stingy of it,” says Master Charles.

'So I tell Thomas, when he takes the champagne round, to pour it *fast* into young gentlemen's glasses, sir, for fear of consequences; but gentlemen who know the world, as it might be your honour, merely say, “Champagne? thank you!” and they just tilt sup their glass a little as they hold it, and thus get none of the froth.'

'Well, Tibbits, we grow wiser by experience; though I doubt very much whether this sort of experience doesn't come when it is too late to fully profit by it: time passes away; opportunities are given, and we care not for them. It is too late! we get the fuller cup, but the champagne has lost its flavour; it does not sparkle as it did.

'Aye! who brought this note, Thomas? Lord Millington's groom? Is it Larry? Show him in.

'Well, Larry,' said the Colonel, 'it will take me some time to answer this note. How's his lordship?'

'Sure, and he's doing finely, barring a touch of the

gout; and it's mighty pleasant to see his lordship when it's coming on, riding about the property and cursing them all right and left; and faixs! it's proud they ought to be to see him relieving his feelings.'

'Well, Larry, I must go into the library and write a note to his lordship: sit down, Larry, and take a glass of the port beside you, and make yourself comfortable.'

'Sure, and I will, your Honour.'

'And a mighty pleasant gentleman the Colonel is intirely; good luck to him, and may he get through his letter aisy. And what's thim?' soliloquised he, as he helped himself to some olives; 'may be it's gooseberries! Och, wirra! wirra! and it's bad luck to you, Master Charles, salt-ing the swatemeats: sure, an' the wine's beautiful; and it's iligant glasses they are, and it's a fine half-pint they hold, an' sure it's a fine jug to match; may be it's potheen; sure an' it's wather, bad luck to it!'

'Why, Larry,' said the Colonel, returning with his note, 'you haven't left much in the decanter.'

'Sure, your Honour, and didn't you ax me to take a glass, and may be I took anither, and bad luck to the bottle for not holding more. Och, it's iligant wine!

'*Iligant*, indeed!' said the Colonel; 'and do you know what that wine cost me a bottle?—eighteen shillings a bottle.'

'Eighteen shillings a bottle! to hear that now! och, it's iligant wine, your Honour; and it's worth every shilling of the money!!! And this note's for my lord, is it? Sure, and he shall have it.'

We now return to the two ladies in London. Scene, pretty much the same as before, with the exception of a small bright-looking fire in the grate, for it was now September. The one lady was sitting bolt upright, with the concave cuckoo-shaped backed, on a sort of a thing like a

music-stool. She was knitting, in a dreamy sort of a way, for to all appearance her thoughts were far away, resting 'upon her young man in the country.' How she could have been such a fool I can't imagine, but she really had worked herself up to a sort of attachment for him, and her ordinary, plain, unpleasing features had an almost spiritual impression stamped upon them, such as a real attachment in some marvellous manner produces. Old Peregrine King was a brute; but in this woman there were some true womanly feelings: she felt happy in herself, and at peace with all the world. She felt happy, and the feeling was strange and new to her, pretty much as it must have been to the Roman citizen when the gates of the temple of Janus, open in time of war, were closed in time of peace. (They were closed for a short time under Numa, 714 B.C., and for the second time in the days of Augustus, B.C. 5, after an interval of 700 years.) Or, to descend from great things to small, she must have felt pretty much as Sheridan did during the only three days in his life he was ever out of debt, and which immediately followed payment. Not unhappy; but an odd, unsettled feeling, the reverse of comfort.

Mrs. Blunt reclined in her chair, her eyes closed, a common habit with her, not that she slept, but that she was in deep thought. Presently she said, 'I feel very weak to-night, Miss Gumps. My time cannot be far off. I should like to see my daughter again and her future husband. I trust he will be kind to her. I have, indeed, no reason to doubt it; but it makes me *very* anxious. I am anxious about you too, Tabitha; I earnestly pray that it may be for your happiness; but, oh! if you should have cause to think this man—this—this—what shall I call him, for he is no longer young, and his wife no long time dead. If you think him mercenary, only influenced by

your money, remember, there may be many years of misery before you.' Presently she continued, 'If anything should happen to my darling child — anything that would make her stand in need of a protector in the changes and chances of this transitory life—if it had been granted to me to see her once settled in life, I could then have gladly departed in peace. God has been very good to me; my life has been a very happy one, and not an entirely useless one. Yet, still, I may say, with the excellent Hooker, "that I have seen this life to be full of perturbations, and have long been preparing to leave it." I should, I think, like to see Mr. Harvey this evening: he is a good man. I intended to have asked him yesterday: he is a good man, and a thorough believer in Sir Ezekiel Storton. I wish *I* could be! it makes me very anxious; fortunately, he is not my only trustee. If ever my child should want a friend, promise me that she shall find one in you.'

Miss Gumps promised, and meant it too; and, touched by her sister's earnestness, bent down her head to conceal her emotion. There was a stillness for a time, only broken by the measured beat of the clock, and the cheery, soothing, murmuring of the fire. On a sudden, Miss Gumps was startled by a slight cry, and observed her sister-in-law bend forwards in her seat, and immediately fall back again, whilst an agonized expression passed over her features. A slight shiver followed, and before Miss Gumps could spring to her aid, the gentle spirit had departed, and Penelope's mother was at rest.

For a time Miss Gumps could not believe it; she thought it must be a trance, and hurried out to call in some of the servants. She did not return for a time, and when she entered the room again she was absolutely startled at the change which had come over the features of her former

sister-in-law; *who* could have recognised the presence of death in those features, over which an almost angelic beauty hovered; every harsh line had been smoothed away; every trace, rather of illness than of time, had vanished, and given place to that sort of unearthly loveliness sometimes, though rarely, seen shortly after dissolution. Miss Gumps gazed upon her for a time in silent terror and amazement; she could not believe it, and she so much younger than herself; and who was to break the news to her child? She did feel for poor Pen, but the feeling was transitory. Well, their clergyman was, of course, the person to write. Certainly, her death was a relief to her, for she had felt of late pretty much as Ahab felt towards Micaiah, the son of Imlah, because he prophesied not good concerning him, but evil continually. Then there would be a funeral, and she would have to go into mourning. Moreover, her marriage with Captain King must be delayed, at least, she *supposed so*. At all events, Pen's marriage must be deferred indefinitely. To use her own expression, she could not 'abide' Algernon. No one knew why; and the marriage should NOT take place. Why, she could not explain to herself. Why is it that middle-aged spinsters who, if they be not some of the very kindest and best of womankind, certainly make long strides to the other extreme, must oppose the happiness of their neighbours, if unable to forward it, or rather *indisposed* to do so? Well; she would travel for a time, and take Pen with her. Pen should not enter into a family who might look down upon her. No; not she! no! Why should she herself, Mrs. Peregrine King (in hope), be insulted by a haughty aristocrat like Lady Emily? Very kind! Oh, yes; deuced kind! as dear Peregrine used to say; very kind to the poor. She herself had not been pleased with her visit to Conyers Castle. Oh, no! *My*

Lady, indeed! She was kind and condescending! treated her like a sister! All very well for Pen; but *she* liked to be made *company* of — that she did. And the Bishop, too. What business had he to be called my lord? and to sit in the House of Lords, and wear a black silk apron, too? They were all old women, in her opinion. And the old Colonel; an eternal fidget! Algernon, too! she would spoil his fun in that quarter. Why he had not spoken half a dozen words to her during her visit! *She* trust Pen to his care? Not she; she knew a trick worth two of that. Charley was the only one of the party worth a farthing. (She was not aware that he had put the toad in her bedroom, and came in to the rescue when the trick was discovered.) Moreover, Jerry and he had played her another trick, which she had attributed to Algernon. She had expressed great apprehension of burglars; and Charley, after an interview with Tibbits, had procured a pair of Algernon's ankle-laced shooting boots, in which he had placed a pair of long blue worsted stockings, which, by stuffing with cotton, wool, old rags, &c., he had made a very good imitation of the thimble-rig fellows, and had just modelled that very style of legs which are declared never to look complete without a pair fetters! Jerry and he remained near the door, after they had placed them under her bed, and arranged them in a natural and life-like position, just protruding from under the bed to the middle of the calf of the leg. They heard Miss Gumps enter her room, sit herself down before the glass, and then they had to wait some time.

Whether Lady Emily's maid, or Jerry's maid (whichever it was), happened to be in the secret, I know not; but it was just as she was leaving Miss Gumps, having done her up for the night, that the alarm was given; a yell that rang through the house, 'Fire!' 'Murder!'

‘Robbery!’ and I know not what; and an extraordinary figure, clad somewhat like a Bedouin Arab, dashing along the corridor with marvellous agility. The Colonel turned out in his Tartan dressing-gown, with a cavalry sabre in his hand, Algernon with his revolver, Charley with his cricket-bat, followed by the servants. Such a row as had never happened before! Charley got into a tremendous scrape; but was begged off by Miss Gumps, who had taken it into her sagacious head that Algernon was the inventor of the scheme; and she more than half suspected Pen. The Colonel was annoyed, and gave Charley a lecture on the folly of practical jokes; but he pleaded Miss Gumps’s insolence to Jerry; and was, at Miss Gumps’s special intervention, forgiven.

My word, wouldn’t she just pay Algernon off now! Moreover, she had a nephew of her own, who had proved a great drain upon her finances, and she would transfer him to Pen. Yes, that would do very well. There was plenty of time, too. Pen’s marriage must, at all events, be delayed for six months at least, if not a year. Well, she would certainly travel for a few months, and if woman’s wit could not manage matters she should be surprised.

And in due course of time the funeral took place. And Algernon and Lady Emily accompanied poor Pen, and they remained there a short time; and there they met Sir Ezekiel, and, to their surprise, a distant cousin of Miss Gumps, one Captain Peregrine King, who took an active part in the management of matters, and proved a most invaluable ally.

And the funeral was like most other funerals. The ladies did not appear, and the gentlemen conversed on various subjects, none of them having reference to the matter in hand. And the will was opened, and other matters

discussed in connexion with the will. And Pen was not of age till six months' time, and it was arranged that she should accompany Miss Gumps in her travels. Captain Peregrine had hinted at the propriety of some gentleman escort, and suggested his own name. But Miss Gumps's sense of propriety took the alarm at once. Not she! What would the world say, indeed! Poor Pen did not dare to accept Lady Emily's offer of a residence at Conyers Castle. Lady Emily saw that it would not do to press it, and said nothing more.

And so they departed on their travels; and it was decided that the wedding should take place when Pen was of age, in six months' time. It was also arranged that the moated Grange should be refitted. This the Colonel decided on doing at his own expense.

So they drove over one fine bright day to the Abbey Farm, some miles from them. The woods were just beginning to gild their foliage, and the whole scene was very lovely. The splendid old Grange, as it was now called, with its low embattled gateway, and its moat partially filled up, looked even more picturesque than when Mr. Lumley Jenkyns called on Farmer Briggs.

So they went over the house. *Of course* Farmer Briggs did not wish to leave it when he heard that Algernon was coming to live there, for he had made himself very comfortable. And he took the party upstairs to see his study, which he had lately fitted up. A very comfortable little room, with a mahogany bookcase, with plate-glass front; handsome carpet; half-a-dozen Windsor chairs; one large Morocco leather chair, of that luxurious make seldom met with except at a dentist's. In fact, he had purchased it at the sale of a member of that profession, and had named it Purgatory! Over the chimney-piece hung the picture of a prize ox, and an engraving of the late

General Conyers, whose picture had been presented to him, no one knew why; but it was supposed to be the correct thing to do, and it was therefore done accordingly. Consequently, it was engraved, and the engraving purchased by his tenantry and their friends.

‘Well, Mr. Briggs,’ observed Lady Emily, ‘you have a very pleasant prospect from the window of your study, and you can be as retired as you think proper.’

‘Well, yes, my lady. I sits and studs and studs here all the day long, and *nobody’s never the wiser!!*’

‘Well, Mr. Briggs, I can readily imagine such a result.’

‘Beg your pardon, my lady. Make so bold. The Major’s going to be married? isn’t he?’

‘Yes,’ replied Lady Emily.

‘Well, my lady, I heard the young lady had a tidy bit of money. Well, they must make up something between ’em, my lady, as I was saying to our Sarah yesterday. It’s all very well for a man who can work; but if a man hasn’t been bred up to work, he ought not to marry unless he can see his way. When Poverty comes in at the door, then Love flies out of the window. People can do well on a little at first; but when they have a lot of children then it pinches, and it’s too often the only live stock of a poor gentleman that does increase. You see, my lady, “it’s bad enough when they come to suck their *mother*; but when they afterwards come to suck their FATHER, it’s a bad thing then;” it is for certain. Old Captain King wanted to buy a bit of my land the other day, and he sent a chap from London — a lawyer chap — to try to come over me; but it was no manner of use. I soon saw through him. If the Colonel likes to buy the land he shall have it reasonable; but on condition that he takes care it shall never come into Peregrine King’s hands. I have my

reasons for it, my lady. So the Major is coming to live here. Well, I've no objections to the house the Colonel is going to fit up for me. There isn't much of a farmyard, certainly; but there is a good place for sheep here.'

'Well, but,' observed Lady Emily, 'Major Conyers would not like such a thing so near his house.'

'Indeed, my lady! I couldn't understand any gentleman objecting to a *sheepfold* adjoining his flower garden. Well, my lady, there's no accounting for tastes, as the old woman said when she kissed her cow. There are some fine covies of birds on the farm, my lady, if the Colonel and the Major come over.'

'Well, I fancy,' said Lady Emily, 'that we have a shooting party to-morrow.'

'Now, Algernon,' said she, 'I do hope that you will join the party to-morrow. The other day you vowed that you had no things. Now, have you provided them?'

'Well, I have. I sent for Chilcom the other day, and he promised to have them ready by to-morrow morning.'

'Well, but Algernon, is he a safe man to trust to?'

'I fancy so. I told him to make me a jacket, waistcoat, and trowsers, of some dark material. I did not care what. He told me that he had a strong myrtle-green cord. I decided at once upon it as the very thing. Told him to procure metal buttons. He said that he had some very plain silver-plated buttons, something like the hunt buttons. I told him that would do very well. Do you employ the man?'

'Well, I fancy he has something to do for Gerald, but scarcely know to what EXTENT he employs him.'

'Well, my toggery will give him no great opportunity for much originality of design. I believe I have my guns at the Castle.'

'Well, that's all right so far. Do you know who

Gerald has invited? He said something about Lord Milington and one or two others.'

The next morning early Algernon roused him from his slumbers, looked out of his window, and proceeded to comment on things in general.

'Well,' thought he, 'Pen was right in warning me to be prepared for storms. Poor girl, her heart must be sad enough at present. Fancy having to travel for some months with that old firebrand! Shouldn't wonder if she has made up her mind to come and keep house for us at the old Grange. By-the-bye, Pen does not like the term Grange; wishes it be called the Manor, or Abbey, or something. I suppose she intends to have her own way in it. Women always do. Now, I wonder if a man agreed with his wife in every remark she made, was prepared to carry into execution any scheme she proposed — my word, how it would puzzle her! Dear me, how cold the water is this morning! Nothing like having it fresh from the pump. What a fool I was to sacrifice my beard to please Pen. Some men manage to shave comfortably; I never can. Here goes for cut number one. Hang it! Cut number two! I thought so. Takes less time to pare the skin off at once. That, I suppose, will do?'

And he hurried on with his toilet.

'What does Gerald mean by starting so early! And that bothering rascal has not brought my things. Well, he'll catch it if they are not ready by after breakfast. I'll have a stroll before the rest come down.'

And out he went, and wandered on till he came to Chilcom's, the village tailor.

'Well, Chilcom, will those things of mine be finished by after breakfast?'

'Well, sir, I should be glad of a little more time.'

'Why?'

‘Well, sir, you see, sir,’ observed he, holding up a splendacious waistcoat on which he was at work, a geranium coloured satin waistcoat, with flowers of fearfully varied tints; ‘you see, sir, young Mr. Sims is to be married to-morrow, and he came over last night and saw this waistcoat. Very chaste, sir; been much admired, I assure you. He said he would have it if it could be done in time: and to you, sir, a gentleman like you, a suit of clothes more or less is nothing to you.’

‘Well, now, Chilcom, I tell you plainly, if my things are not at the Castle by nine, not another stitch of work will you ever do for the Castle; besides this, I was asked only the other day by one of my late serjeants if I knew of an opening for him where he could start in business; and I’ll have him down in forty-eight hours. I should advise you to have the things up at the Castle by nine.’

Mr. Chilcom laid aside the flaring waistcoat in a great hurry, and Algernon strolled onwards.

‘I like his impudence. Wishes me to start off in one of Henry Hill’s best frock coats, a nice thing to go through a hedge in; or thin summer trowsers for a turnip-field after last night’s rain. I’ll be as good as my word if he fails me.’ And so, after a circuitous route, he found himself again at the Castle gates; here he found Lord Milington on his cob, in whose praises he was loud.

‘First-rate cob. Stands fire like an old charger. See how he lifts his feet.’

Presently they were joined by a young man in a sort of Napoleon boots, a fair young man with a red moustache, a nephew of Dr. Churchill’s, a young Oxford man, a gentleman of Lincoln College! got up regardless of expense: on his head he wore a Glengarry, with an eagle’s feather therein; a tweed shooting-jacket, with a genuine Oxford cut about it, admirably adapted for lounging about

Quad in, containing a multitude of pockets, and rejoicing in a galaxy of ivory buttons, whereon were carved sporting subjects; in short, just the thing for everything but its present purpose. In the first place, it was too tight; in the second, it was not large enough, and too much padded. Nevertheless, it was much to the satisfaction of the wearer; perhaps the great thing after all. And with a 'How-dye-do, Conyers?' 'How-d'ye-do, Millington?' who answered him with a 'HOW DO YOU DO, SIR?' he strolled into the court.

After breakfast they waited for some time for Algernon, Colonel Conyers with a great deal of impatience. The Lincoln man suggested that he was probably making a cruel swell of himself. At last Algernon made his appearance, looking in a perfect fury. But who shall describe his dress! Certainly he had ordered a myrtle-green cord, with white metal club buttons; but he had certainly never anticipated a short round sort of sailor's jacket, with waistcoat and trowsers to match, with the club letter L. & N. W. R. In fact, Mr. Chilcom had never had such an order before; and, deceived in his instructions, had made Algernon a railway porter's dress, for he had lately had given him a contract for the clothing of the railway servants, and had managed to save some of the material. At another time Algernon might have been amused; but he had been in no joking humour all the morning. He had donned the dress very unwillingly. Nothing but sheer necessity would have induced him to do so at all. Nor was his temper much improved by the blokish-looking individual addressing him as Porter! However, he intimated to him that his present dress was far fitter for work than his neighbour's; and offered to run him, jump with him, or wrestle with him, whichever he pleased, at the same time confessing a decided preference for the latter

trial of skill or strength, which, for a time, had the effect of silencing his friend.

Oh! the field sports of one's early days. The hasty breakfast; the bright fresh morning in September; the first certificate in one's pocket; the anticipated pleasure of talking to the fellows, on one's return to school, of having taken out a licence; the easy shots at the birds put up in the standing corn, and then flying into the tufty old sward, bog, fallow, or potato-fields not far from the standing corn, never flying any great distance, but soon dropping; when the birds rose giving one an electric shock, and all taking of aim was out of the question; the awfully bad shooting before luncheon time; the heavy refectation! ponderous in cold meat and malt; the feeling of heaviness, and dearth of excitement which would be keenness in any but a schoolboy; the reversing of the order of the day, now hitting as often as previously missing.

One's schooldays can never return. All things considered, perhaps a great comfort. Why is it that one could never pass the grand old cathedral on the box-seat of her Majesty's mail without feeling a sort of inexplicable tingling which was certainly not caused by the cushions of the box-seat? Talk of sympathetic noses, of brawny origin! Aye, marry! *porter's*, indeed! Action and reaction! Talk of one's schooldays as the happiest of one's life! An audacious falsehood. In one's young days tormented to death by a number of young imps a little older and stronger than one's-self, with the ingenuity of demons, the night after the return, 'the mother's kiss yet warm upon the cheek;' the hard, cold, and miserable bed; the long hours of wakefulness and watching; the dropping to sleep for an hour or two; the home dream! the startled waking; the gas lamp on the opposite house throwing its

diapered lights on the ceiling; the early rising on the following morning; the hasty toilet; the huge bare schoolrooms, with that biennial smell of whitewash in combination with orange peel thrown into the stoves and fires: it gives me a chill, even at the present day, when I chance to meet with it. Then, in after years, when at the other end of the school, soon to leave for Oxford or Cambridge. The lovely views from the tops of the dormitories; the favourite haunts known to one's-self and two others who had discovered that the trap-door *would* open, and that there was a sort of nest on the roof, where we could smoke the most atrocious of horrible cheroots at sixpence the dozen! (what will not boys do?) and whence we could see the glorious old castle and magnificent park. Verily, true happiness consisteth in moderating one's desires. Let us enjoy what we have with contentment and thankfulness. How much of evil is there in knowledge. Oh, the change from school to Oxford! Some fifty pounds in one's pocket and unlimited credit, which few in proportion make any very great misuse of; the large and comfortably furnished rooms; the scout whom one is at first disposed to reverence; the kitchen and buttery at one's beck and call; the punctilious courtesy of the college tutor; the first breakfast in his rooms; nice gentlemanly fellow that he was, feeling not over comfortable with him, but gaining courage on observing how far, much farther from being at his ease he was with us; and then the way we had (led astray by a very active spirit, now holding a leading position in the world) of moving the lecture table, raising it from the ground on our knees, and sliding it onwards with the most imperturbable faces, till we had deposited it on the lap of the lecturer. How he would then slightly move his chair back; and how the class and the table would follow him, apparently in the most natural way; and how he would pretend not

to notice it. We were all of us fools in those days. Are we wiser now? And then the glorious pull down the river, as freshmen, in the racing boats, 'our voices keeping tune and our oars keeping time'—just like a peal of bells!! The comfortable college dinner, and the wine party afterwards. The three-dozen hamper of sherry ordered from the paternal wine merchant in London, by the father, and voted merely wine and water. Would that I had some of it now. Then the daily chapel, which we did not attend so regularly as we ought to have done. Then the sovereign to one's younger brother at school, asked for as a LOAN! Then poor Jerry's cheroots declined by the whole college most indignantly; and on Jerry never daring to offer them a second time, the whole lot purchased at quarter price, a few shillings, and sent down to the younger brother at school, who smoked them with his familiars outside the new dormitory roof, a place secure from observation. How the younger brother wrote a letter, brimful of thanks, for the condemned cheroots, but did not like the *thick ones*! How, on poor Jerry being asked for an explanation, he replied with a groan —

'That shows where my half-pound of Hudson's Lopes went. They were worth four times as much as you paid for all the cheroots.'

And what cut poor Jerry to the quick, appeared to be their reception.

'To lose them, bad enough! but to be despised—the cheroots preferred to them!!!—alas! alas!'

Three weeks later: a fine frosty October morning—scene, a church crowded with a huge motley assembly of roughs; a churchyard also filled with the same heterogeneous assemblage. The mob evidently bent upon mischief, throwing hassocks across the church, smashing the pew doors, jumping upon the seats, howling, yelling, and,

in fact, indulging in every sort of freak; for the due enjoyment of which the sacred character of the place appeared to offer unusual advantages. The mob evidently meant mischief — not a doubt of it; so Dr. Churchill walked into the church from the vestry, and very quietly adjourned the meeting to the Town Hall, to the very great indignation of his Majesty, King Mob; who had taken possession of the church and churchyard, less for the purpose of opposing a church-rate than for having what they termed a lark! So Dr. Churchill, accompanied by Colonel Conyers, Algernon, and Captain Peregrine King, who had his own private reasons for renewing his intimacy with the Conyers party, entered the Town Hall, and took up their position on the platform.

‘Humph!’ said Dr. Churchill to Colonel Conyers, ‘we shan’t do much to-day. Our Radical and Dissenting friends well understand **PACKING** a meeting. A few of the more influential Dissenting families are absent, especially the Wesleyans. How our friends manage to allow such an unfair advantage to be taken I cannot quite understand. As a general rule, Churchmen and Conservatives have no chance at a public meeting; the whole matter is settled beforehand. We shall do nothing to-day. Of course a rate will be refused; but it will be a mere matter of form; for of course we shall demand a poll, and shall beat them three to one.’

‘Well,’ said the Colonel, ‘I don’t see the fun of being beaten at the meeting, if it could be managed otherwise. But, as you say, it is a mere form.’

And he cast his eye over the meeting. Some thousand men were assembled: mechanics and factory operatives, dressed, generally speaking, in dark velveteen jackets and trowsers, and packed as closely as possible.

Dr. Churchill took the chair. A resolution was proposed by Colonel Conyers in favour of a church-rate, which was seconded by a leading manufacturer. And they, in turn, addressed the many-headed.

Dr. Churchill spoke well and ably. He began by saying that this was a question on which men entertained many opinions; but that under such circumstances there was common ground upon which they could meet. Many had a conscientious objection to church-rates; but as they were bound to obey the laws of the land, surely they ought to pay church-rates, even for conscience' sake. Turning their own arguments very neatly against themselves, he appealed to the mass of Irish Roman Catholics, under the leadership of Mr. Jonathan Sturgis, as to the duty of a man's obeying the teaching of his own Church, modestly hinting (in reply to the remark of a gentleman from the Emerald Isle, that they intended to have all the churches in the land for the Holy Catholics) that it was most desirable, under those circumstances, that they should be handed over to them in decent order, to say the least, which speech, being taken literally by the many-headed, they received with three cheers. In short, the speech was a perfect model — lightly touching upon anything which might tend to offend his hearers, bringing the strong points broadly out; laying on his glazing colours with a bold and free touch, yet skilfully withal. They were Boddington men. Would they allow the church which their forefathers had built to be given up to the bat and the owl? (Immense cheering!) Where was there a town within twenty miles with such a church? Was it not the glory of the neighbourhood? Who paid for church-rates? Why the landlords. What would the landlords do if church-rates were abolished? Why, add ten per cent. to their rents, and put the difference in

their own pockets. (A voice, 'That's true.') Were their landlords to be unburdened, that they themselves might be burdened? Never! (A voice, 'Give them ten per cent. additional.' Prolonged cheering.) And having, as he thought, prepared the ground for Colonel Conyers, he sat down, after presenting him to the meeting.

No sooner did the Colonel get up than he was addressed in a short and facetious speech by a gentleman who looked like a gamekeeper run to seed! and who raised aloft a hareskin upon a pole, to the great delight of the many-headed.

Dr. Churchill begged them to give him a fair hearing.

Had the Colonel had any idea of his reception, never would he have left Conyers Castle. Whenever anything he said appeared to make an impression, the hareskin was elevated on high, and instantly a storm of groans followed. There is something in the sound of a groan, some two thousand strong, that is the reverse of a sedative to the nerves of a speaker addressing a mob as a tyro: pretty much like entering Van Amburgh's wild beast show for the first time in one's life, and about feeding-time.

The Colonel felt very indignant, and especially uncomfortable. Many playful allusions were made to his game preserves, many more to his official duties as Chairman of the Board of Guardians. How many paupers had he locked up in Conyers Castle, in the dungeons under the great towers? He had been building a church, had he? They supposed he would build a Bastile next? And *endow* it, suggested another gentleman.

So the gallant Colonel sat down, looking red, angry, and very much discomfited.

Up then arose Mr. Solomon Boanerges, the stump orator. He moved as an amendment—'That whereas

the Church of England tyrannised over men's souls as the Bastile over their bodies, church-rates were an abomination in the eyes of the Lord, and stank in his nostrils (the mob here applauded immensely). It was the duty of all men who loved the pure Gospel, and looked upon religion as a thing between a man and his God, to move for the total and unconditional abolition of the church-rates.' He then went on in the usual style. Furiously attacking the army and navy, he said that a soldier was a perfect slave; was looked upon as little better than a dog. In fact, he had a brother of his own who had been in the army for years, and had told him that nothing could prosper under the cold shade of the aristocracy. (Go it, Solomon.) His brother had served out his time. And so Mr. Solomon proceeded to draw a vivid sketch of the horrors of a soldier's life. And, warming with his subject, he inquired how could anything prosper? How could there be anything like a fellow feeling between a private soldier, a man (as he represented it) endowed with every virtue, and a bloated aristocrat (he used the term advisedly) like Colonel Conyers.

Whereupon a sheriff's officer's assistant, glancing at Mr. Solomon's obese figure, quietly observed that the above-mentioned Boanerges looked far more like a bloated aristocrat himself; for he never did any work, but was paid handsomely for going about the country talking rubbish.

Whereat Mr. Solomon Boanerges, turning him round, looked at his interrupter, and observed with infinite dignity that he was not going to be put down by a d—d bum-bailiff! (and again the mob cheered). The army was a curse to the country, and his brother, who had nearly served out his time, assured him that he had not passed a single happy day since he had entered it.

This little communication evidently told with the mob. A sort of half-stifled sob. The Conyers party glanced uneasily at each other for a few seconds, when the silence was suddenly broken by an exclamation of, 'Happen he's *soft*!' (Shouts of laughter.)

No, he wasn't *soft*, he was a fine fellow, and his body was covered with scars.

'Had he been flogged four or five times?'

Mr. Boanerges got furious, and began to abuse his audience, an unwise proceeding, for his friends of the many-headed gave vent to divers little pleasantries, which did not tend to the allaying of his wrath, and in a perfect fury he sat down.

Next a mild-looking gentleman, with a high forehead and spectacles, in a very bland manner begged to second the resolution; spoke much of our glorious constitution, of our pure and Protestant religion and its freedom, admitting, as it did, every shade of opinion into its fold. This was an age of progress: the Establishment alone stood still. Its principles were opposed to true freedom. Prelacy was worse than Popery, as less evidently dangerous and destructive.

'Hang the fellow!' observed Captain King, 'he is making a most dangerous speech. What business is it of his? I knew him well at St. Omer: a clever enough fellow. He afterwards took orders. I hear he professes to have become a Protestant Dissenter, and to have taken up Unitarian views. Not a bit of it! the man is a Jesuit still, corresponding with the General of the order weekly, you may be sure of it.'

So, after a very clever and cutting speech, the gentleman with the high forehead sat down.

'Never mind,' said Dr. Churchill to the Colonel; 'the motion is lost, not a doubt of it. The meeting has been

too well packed to give us a chance. Now, remember to demand a poll.'

So he put the motion to the assembly, and the amendment was carried by about three to one. However, the Colonel demanded a poll, much to the disgust of the mob, and the rabbit or hareskin having been duly shaken in his face, the meeting dispersed.

The Veracious Historian (as some writer or other terms himself) finds it by no means easy to pay proper and fitting attention to the *unities*. Indeed, they inflict as much anxiety and perturbation of mind on him, as they did on that gentleman waited upon by a certain committee consisting of Mr. Nicholas Nickleby, Miss Snivellici, and the Infant Phenomenon.

Pen and her aunt are somewhere on the Continent. Algernon is still at the Castle, somewhat disgruntled at not having heard from Pen for some time. Her letters grew colder and colder, a thing not likely to infuse extra warmth into his own. And he was fast arguing himself into the conviction that he had made a great mistake; Pen was too young for him; with her fortune, she might make a far more brilliant match; and proceeded to chant in a minor key some of Walter Scott's fine lines anent the 'Noble Moringer'—something about the young bride taking the young bridegroom, &c. &c.—till Lady Emily told him one day that he was becoming a thorough goose; that she had lost all patience with him. She thought that, after all, he would act most wisely in thinking no more about the matter; he was not the man, after all, and he had better not trouble himself any more about the matter. If anything happened to the old aunt, who had returned, so she was informed, to Portland Place, matters might yet go right. The truth was, he was afraid of the old aunt. She knew he was,

there was no use in denying it. It was all very well to say, as of John Knox, that Algernon 'feared not the face of man' (which I do not much think he did), but she should have much liked to have met the Mrs. John Knox of that day. However HE might have thundered against the unloveliness of love locks, and of women's gear also, he doubtless caught it, when unable to give a vivid description of the newest fashions worn by the unhappy Queen of Scots and her maidens. The old, old story! Geneva, England, Rome! Black gown, and white surplice, cope and chesabel, wife and hearth wife.* The mode may be different, but the facts are the same. Gown of Geneva, surplice of Prelacy, the colours antagonistic, forms diverse. All came to the same thing, as Gawaine once decided, being asked by his wife for a definition.

With a shy look, he rushed madly into rhyme: 'I once heard a joke about curtain *lecturing* in a black and white dress, and I will bring it in last. Here goes,' said he:

It mattered but little to him which was the right or the wrong one;
 The tint mattered little, he said, as to which was the wrong or the right
 one,
 If the preacher were earnest and true, the sermon not weak but a strong
 one;
 For vesper or matin the dress he'd as soon have a sombre as bright one;
 If that for the morning were dark, then the brighter seemed best for the
 night one;
 The monk was not made by the hood, the saying he knew was a trite
 one;
 But his moral (she well understood) of course, must be quite a polite one.
 Though Bertha preached well in a black robe; she *lectured* with *force* in a
white one.

* In the early Norman times, though a priest might not marry *openly*, private marriages were winked at, and the ladies were *recognised* in good society; in other words, the knight's or squire's wife visited them!!

‘Now, what do you think of the rhymes?’ said he, in a deprecatory manner.

‘*Sound without sense,*’ said she. ‘Pretty much what school-boys have to do at school. Rhymes without meaning: nonsense verses, I think they call them.

‘I once learned a little Latin,’ she continued, ‘to help poor George, who was killed in the Crimea, and had to write nonsense verses for *him*. He had four lines to append to each exercise. He was ill for a fortnight, and when he recovered, his master laid his last two exercises, before and after his illness, before him. There had been a short interregnum, as I have said, Dame *versus* Master M.D. vice M.A. Alas, the two exercises ended each with the four selfsame lines, and poor George was flogged and confined to courts, just as if it was *his* fault (as he expressed it) to have been *ill* for a fortnight!

‘“And this,” observed he, “you call *justice*.”’

Now, we return to Algernon Conyers.

‘Now, Emily,’ said he, ‘what is to be done?’

‘Really, Algernon,’ said she, ‘I don’t know what to advise. Certainly, Pen’s last two letters, which you have shown me, look very odd. There’s a screw loose somewhere, as Gerald terms it. Can Pen have another admirer? I think that I have heard Pen speak of a cousin of Miss Gumps’s. At all events, you can do nothing without further information. Your plan is to call at once in Portland Place; see Pen, and find out what the matter is. You took it so easily at first. You cannot suppose that a woman cares for a man, in nine cases out of ten, unless she has reason to believe him deeply attached to her. Women make no allowance for exalted sensitiveness! They look upon it as absurd and unreal. Do you think that I should ever have proposed to Gerald! not I, although I took good care to show him plainly enough what my

sentiments were. Now, I find no fault whatever with Pen, knowing well with whom she had to deal. You *must* see her and find out what is wrong. Miss Gumps will prove a dangerous enemy. And I know that she believes you to have instigated Charlie to play some tricks upon her.'

'Young scoundrel,' muttered Algernon to himself.

'A bold stroke is generally the wisest, and in these matters rashness sometimes becomes real prudence. It would be useless for me to invite her here for the present. So start off to-morrow, by the first express, there is one leaving Dillington at eight, which reaches Euston Square by somewhere about two. Now, mind! avoid a scene with Miss Gumps, if possible.'

'Very well, Emily, and now good night. I'll rescue Pen from the jaws of the Dragon, and have her in perfect safety.'

'No hope of that, Algernon; so make your mind easy—'

So the next morning they started in the drag, the Colonel tooling his bays with his usual skill.

'Now, Algernon,' said he, 'I daresay you look upon me as an old fogie, not up to these matters; but hang it, man, *do* infuse a little more warmth into your manner. I don't believe you ever kissed the girl. Come, be honest now?'

'Haven't I! Not so great a fool as *I look*.'

'Indeed,' replied the Colonel. 'Well, even that assumption would leave a pretty fair margin; but not to bandy compliments, I daresay it *may* all go right; but somehow you've botched it, man! I really think that I had better go to town with you.'

'It will be botched and no mistake if he does,' thought Algernon.

'Well, you don't appear anxious to have me, so I will

e'en stay at home ; but don't forget the warmth, my dear boy. Your very look freezes. Kiss old Miss Gumps herself, if necessary ; but don't be *done*. Here's the train—get your traps in. I'll get your ticket. Good-bye ; now don't forget the warmth !'

Accordingly, at or about two, Algernon arrived at the Euston Station, left his luggage there, and strolled on towards Portland Place, called, and was ushered in.

'Hadn't you better see Miss Blunt first, sir,' said the servant, with a grin. 'Miss Gumps very fractious to-day, is, indeed, sir !'

However, there was no time, for the drawing-room door opened, and there appeared Miss Gumps.

'Well, Major Conyers, I am glad to see you, for it is as well that matters should be placed upon a proper footing. Mrs. Blunt, as you are aware, has left the whole arrangement of matters to me. Mrs. Blunt was not aware that your fortune was so small, and I really cannot permit matters to go farther ; but think it high time that your *conditional* engagement should come to an end.'

'Indeed,' replied Algernon, 'and is that Pen's opinion also ?'

'Sir, I desire that you will take it on *my* assurance.'

'Really, Miss Gumps, I never was more surprised in my life. Pray what cause have you for such an extraordinary decision ?'

'Extraordinary, sir ! Not extraordinary at all. Sir, I will never allow a niece of mine to enter a family where she *may* be looked down upon. She shall have no Right Honourable sisters-in-law ; no, not she.'

'Pray, Miss Gumps, has Lady Emily's conduct been such as to give you cause for such an opinion ?'

'Never mind, sir ; I have my reasons.'

‘Perhaps, madam, you will favour me with your reasons?’

‘No, sir, I will not. My reasons are quite sufficient. You must take my word for it.’

‘Well, madam, you cannot expect me to give up an engagement with Miss Blunt; an engagement, too, sanctioned by her mother, merely because it happens to be distateful to yourself.’

‘Sir, you have my answer.’

‘Well,’ replied Algernon, ‘I must request to see Miss Blunt before I leave the house. I certainly will not take any dismissal, except from her own lips alone.’

‘Sir, you shall NOT see my niece. Sir; you are a needy fortune-hunter.’

‘Sir! sir! won’t you go, sir! I shall ring for the servants, sir!’

‘Allow ME.’

Quietly laying his hand upon the bell with the greatest apparent suavity of manner, though really in a towering rage.

‘Leave the bell alone, sir. You are a complete commander-in-chief, sir,’ said she, walking furiously up to him, shaking her fist in his face.

Algernon walked a step to meet her. There was something in the expression of his face that made her pause.

‘You were good enough to observe, on a former occasion, madam, that Miss Blunt had a temper. Apparently it runs in the family. As to my being a commander-in-chief; perhaps it is as well that I should be. In any case, however, she is so far fortunate in having an aunt so well qualified to act the part of governor-general.’ And he made her a low bow.

‘You are a terrible man,’ replied Miss Gumps, shivering with fright, and backing towards the door. ‘Sir,

you would never have dared to insult me so had you fancied that there was a gentleman in the house to protect me. Now, you will find out your mistake.'

Saying this, she left the room.

Algernon folded his arms, and, leaning his back against the chimney-piece, coolly awaited the arrival of Miss Gumps's champion, looking about as pleasant a gentleman to quarrel with as you'd be likely to meet on a fine summer's day; not quite so dangerous an adversary as a tiger somewhat disgruntled would prove, but very nearly.

'Warmth of manner,' said he to himself. 'The woman would have bitten my nose off!!'

The door opened slowly, and there entered—Peregrine King. Algernon gave him a look Van Amburgh would have envied.

'How ARE you, Algernon?' said he. 'I have been passing a day or two with my relative here. What on earth have you and she been quarrelling about? I found her like a tigress deprived of her whelps, or whelp, I suppose. Ah, you dog, I fancy that was your errand. Seen Pen! I thought not.' (To himself: 'Not going to have this fellow kicking his heels here. He means mischief, plainly. Confound that old fool. What on earth must she be putting her oar in here for, spoiling my fun and her own, too? Confound her!') 'Seen Pen, Algernon? I thought not. She's going to the Wemyss's, near Norton. Well, if I was a young fellow, I don't think I'd allow her to get out at the Norton Station. I am certain your father would not have done so.'

At this moment a light footstep was heard descending the stairs.

'Miss Gumps is in here,' said he, 'if you want a few last words, Algernon.'

And walking to the door of the room at present

tenanted by Miss Gumps, locked the door, with a cool grin on his face, and slipped the key into Algernon's coat pocket, pushed him into the carriage standing at the door.

'Here, Pen,' cried he, 'I will thank you to take a friend of mine to the Euston Station. He will take care of you as far as you are going.' Pushed her in also, and then, to make himself sure, jumped in himself. Reached the station; saw to the luggage; put them both into a coupé: saw them fairly off, and then home.

'Thomas,' said he, with another grin, 'if this matter is talked of in the servants' hall, or reaches your mistress's ears, it will be *warning*, I can tell you. John,' said he to the old coachman, 'you, I know, will hold your tongue for the sake of your old master's daughter. Now, I shall return in a minute.'

So Captain Peregrine King entered the parcel office to make inquiry for a small packet of importance which ought to have arrived before. There was a man dressed like a porter looking over the different parcels.

'Well,' soliloquised the official. 'The Right Honourable the Earl of Dalgarno, &c. &c. What's this? — "Half-a-crown will be paid to the porter! in *addition* to the fare, if delivered in Grosvenor-square before half-past four!" Now that's like a gentleman; it is, for sure! Just time to do it before next train. Now, what's the next? "Peregrine King, Esq." What number? "Portland-place? To be delivered *instantly*?" Oh! you want to go first, do you? afore any of the others, do you? Oh, very well! you shall go last of all, for your imperence.'

And he pitched the parcel into the corner, banged to the inner door before Peregrine King had time to interpose, and started off at once in a cab for Grosvenor-square.

'Confound it,' said he, 'here I am regularly done. I

never do a good-natured thing, but I am sure to suffer for it. Why the deuce must I telegraph over to Dillington to inform the Conyers of Pen's visit? Of course she will never stop at Norton; Algernon is not such a fool. Message, and express from Dillington, will cost Conyers a guinea, I suppose. Well, that is no affair of mine. That confounded old Tab! why must she put *her* foot into the matter, and smash the whole concern? She would be for adopting the girl next, and settling all her fortune upon her. I know a trick worth two. Of course she will find out that I have had some hand in the matter. I must do the martyr, the only thing that pays now-a-days, as my friend Jonathan wisely observes. Well, perhaps it is as well that I did telegraph on. I certainly have lost time, and missed getting my parcel. What an old dunder-noddle I am! of course there are other keys to the office; so he managed to get his parcel, and sending the carriage home, returned on foot himself.

'Now, then, for a scene with Tab,' observed he, as he entered the house; 'ah, yes, *jealousy*!'

Entering the drawing-room, he found Miss Gumps sitting with her back to the light, a favourite position of hers: 'It was grateful to the eyes,' she always *said*, but she is suspected of entertaining a notion that it was good for the complexion.

'Good day, sir! I hope your drive has done you good! Yes, sir, I see it all, but I'll be even with you yet. So you must needs cross my plans, must you! Very well, sir!'

'You may say "*very well, sir*," as much as you please, Miss Gumps. I'm not so blind as you fancy. I do not choose to have that handsome young fellow hanging about the house noon, night, and morning. He's engaged to Pen, and Pen he shall marry. Hang me if I'll have him poaching about my preserves! No, no, Miss Tabitha!

I'm up to a thing or two. I know very well what making love under pretext of quarrelling means. Now, madam, you shall make your choice between us. I won't play second fiddle to please anybody. If you are tired of the engagement, say so; but remember old Peregrine can strike out the ace of spades still!' and he *stalked* out of the room.

'I think I've a good hand this time,' said he.

'Who'd have thought it?' said she; 'and he's jealous of a boy like that! Well, to be sure! Happens it's as well Pen's out of the way. She certainly admired him—who could help it?—and he's none so young, and they say there is no fool like an old fool. Well, after all! And so Thomas saw Algernon lock the door, and put the key in his pocket. They learn that sort of thing in the army! I was always fond of the army!'

But what made Algernon so uncomfortable about Pen? Surely, when friends have been separated for some time, letters grow a little colder, ladies especially, unless they have some notion of their coming before Sir Cresswell Cresswell. The course of *true* love, we are told, never yet ran smooth—engagements, even, for in these there always is (so a young lady told the author) perfect confidence, no room for scruple or doubtfulness; and of course she must be right, at least he supposes so. Yet, somehow—well, he knows not what, exactly; but something exercises a sort of centrifugal influence on them, even when unopposed, so far as we can see.

Well, it so happened that there was a dinner party at Lord Millington's (all dinner parties in country houses are alike), and when his sisters came to see him, his lordship broke out all over into festivities! It so happened that Algernon, who had taken a hand at whist, was somewhat fidgeted by the conversation of one or two young ladies behind him, who were talking over Nice.

‘And so you were at Nice, dear Lady Mary? Pray, did you see that fascinating Prince Cicala, with his charming sisters?’

‘Well, yes, I did. He was awfully smitten with that girl with the sackful of tin; Brown, Jones, or Robinson, one of the three, I forget which. She had a confounded old aunt of the name of Gumps, an old brute! She told me they were engaged. All I know is, that Cicala, who used sometimes to ride out with Blanche and myself, cut us dead after she came, and was everlastingly on horseback with her. Old Gumps used to call him “your Royal Highness” at first. I suppose they will be returning soon. She told me they were engaged, and I suppose they were. She also told me that there was a fellow of the name of Conyers, without a screw to bless himself with, who tried hard to catch her, but that she soon put his nose out — that Pen was far too sharp to be done.’

‘Hush, dearest Lady Mary,’ said her friend, nudging her; ‘he’ll hear you, love; he’s close to you. Don’t you see that he is your mother, Lady Allington’s, partner at whist?’

‘Oh, gammon! What, that swell with the tawny moustache, who sat next me at dinner? a regular brick! That’s the man, is it? Oh, very well, you may tell your friend Miss Blunt that I will take him with all his engagements.’

‘Oh, dearest,’ said her friend and worshipper, ‘your spirits run away with you! You are such a madcap — —’

‘Madcap be hanged! You may tell him I’ll have him, if you like. I suppose you want him yourself, but I’ll put your nose out of joint, you’ll see.’

Such was the conversation Algernon overheard between Lady Mary Beaumanoir, Lord Millington’s niece, about as fast a young lady as one often meets (Lord Allington

had long given up all control over her), and her friend and toad-eater, Miss Dobbs, who did her no good, you may be sure. Of course, such a style of conversation was not without its effect on Algernon, tending admirably to tranquillize his mind, to enable him to concentrate its full power on the *Royal* game. Algernon had been rather a good player, though he had not taken a hand at whist for some months. However, he distinguished himself by trumping his partner's best card, and being taken sharply to task, mended matters by revoking; he then threw down his hand, having gloriously lost the rubber.

Lady Mary fastened upon him like a bulldog, and chaffed him right well about his play, which she had been watching with great glee; but finding him really hurt and annoyed, allowed herself to be cross-questioned to his heart's desire, and being really-kind hearted, as most women are, let out all she knew, without letting him see that she had found out his secret.

We may be sure that he slept well that night!

'For so he giveth his beloved sleep.' Indeed, it is a gift! How different from the sleep of sorrow and anxiety: the early sleep, drowsy and heavy; then the waking at one or two in the morning, sleepless but unrefreshed, the long hours of waking, the aching of heart, the tossing to and fro, the darkness changing into the grey of twilight, and then to broad daylight. With much to be thankful for, let us be thankful indeed for sleep!

So Algernon and Pen found themselves, somewhat contrary to their expectations, shut up in the coupé together, feeling both exceedingly uncomfortable; and if one may venture on such a simile, to compare great things with small, it somewhat reminds one of a scene at the Weirs, near Oxford. Time, seven o'clock on a summer's evening. Place, a large room, scantily furnished;

a dozen young men, most of them with guns; a quantity of dead pigeons, held by a nondescript-looking individual at the open window, the fruits of the evening's sport, if pigeon shooting can be termed a *sport*. Sundry bets have been made as to whether a certain dog can catch a certain rabbit to be turned out in the above-mentioned room, in a given time. The dog makes his *début*, a queer looking brute of no particular breed, a kind of mixture of mongrel Skye terrier, mongrel Blenheim, with a dash of the turnspit. Rags (he was well named) walks into the middle of the room, looks at the rabbit: gets quite close, smells at it. Rabbit sits up! bolt upright!! Ears well up. Rags dashes back in a great fright: rabbit looks uneasy and slightly discomposed: takes a bold step, gives two tremendous hops in the direction of Rags, who takes refuge in a corner, and his master being somewhat riled, gives him a cut with his cane. Rags howls melodiously, which excites a sympathetic feeling in the rabbit. Rabbit rushes into the opposite corner, sits bolt upright, with ears well up, and begins to stamp with its hind leg. Rags shivers, and so on to the end of the story. The latter part surely inapplicable?

Algernon certainly felt as uncomfortable as Pen, and there appeared to be a dark cloud hovering over them. However, Algernon spoke to her in an earnest straightforward way, very different from his first style, and she answered him pretty much as a really true-hearted woman would, and they talked for some time, and all was thoroughly explained and cleared up between them, and the dark cloud passed over, and the storm with it, save only a few drops, the fringe of the shower, and the sun came out and shone brightly.

‘And now, Pen,’ said Algernon, ‘tell me about M. le Prince. Oh, Prince Cicala, one of the nicest of men.’

‘ You know he is more English than Italian. His mother was a Percy of Wentworth Abbey. He was brought up at Eton and Oxford. Aunt Tabitha made a dead set at him; was always asking the Cicalas to ride with me. At Nice I was bothered to death. Generals with sons on their staff—many of them. Prince Cicala I found very pleasant, a thoroughly nice fellow, rather *younger* than yourself.’ Algernon winced. ‘ One day one of his sisters began talking of his great regard for me and a great deal more of the same sort, so I stopped her at once by telling her of my engagement to you. So Prince Cicala, in his quiet way, asked me about it, and I told him how I was *circumstanced*.’

‘ Circumstanced,’ said Algernon, with a smile.

‘ Well, we won’t quarrel about *words*.

‘ “ Well,” said the Prince, “ I, of course, know how things are managed in England. It is very evident that Mrs. Gumps will work you sorrow. Now, pray let me know if, and *when* I can be of service to you. Say nothing to the girls about it. Sisters are rather fond of managing their brother’s affairs for them; and *I’ll keep off the flies for you*.”

‘ And very kind I found him. We used to ride out (the girls and Prince Cicala) most days. Lady Mary he could not at all understand, a warm-hearted affectionate girl; but too much of a hoyden. Prince Cicala’s relations, the Percys, were of the old school, and they could not understand Lady Mary, with her affected coarseness, but really kind heart. I remember, on all going to inquire after her one day, she had been seriously ill, and when Prince Cicala asked her what ailed, with a wink at me, as she lay on the sofa, she said in a low impressive tone, “ *malignant dyspepsia!* ” Poor Prince Cicala looked awfully sold.

‘“I don’t like such jokes,” said he testily.

‘Now, you would have liked him.’

‘I am not so sure of that,’ thought Algernon. ‘A dangerous person.’

‘Surely we cannot have arrived at the Norton Road station.’

‘I think so,’ said Algernon.

‘We have passed Stafford. If Lady Emily *presses* me I will come. I will, really. So, good bye, dear Major Conyers.’

‘Stop, I’ll call the station master. Who? General Wemyss’s? Yes. Station master, is General Wemyss’s carriage here?’

‘It has been here, sir, but I have sent it back again.’

‘Indeed. How is that?’

‘Telegraphic message from London, sir. Here it is.’

‘Miss Blunt not coming. Send General Wemyss’s carriage back again.—*Peregrine King.*’

‘What is to be done?’ said Algernon. ‘I have nothing to do with the matter, I assure you. How far to the Wemyss?’

‘Twelve miles, sir; and no cab to be had nearer than Stafford. All gone, sir. If the lady will wait, there will be one, perhaps, in two hours.’

‘That won’t do,’ said Algernon. ‘Old Peregrine is always plotting. What can be his motive? Now, I remember he said I should not be my father’s son if I did not take you on to Dillington; and he said something, I remember, about the telegraph; and Lady Emily is very anxious to have you. Now, be guided by me. Of course he has telegraphed on to Dillington, and the chariot will be waiting for us there. What can old Perry’s motive be!’ he continued. ‘Surely he is not going to make a match of it with aunt Tab?’

‘I should not wonder a bit,’ said Pen. ‘Only fancy I wanted her to marry Prince Cicala. She looked really quite pleased; but said she did not like *boys*. It would do very well for me, she said, but not for her.’

‘There,’ observed Algernon, ‘she showed her sense; but she will find it, I fancy, a bad bargain for both of them. Well, I ought not to find fault with him now. How pleased Emily *will* be when she gets the message!’

‘I hope she will not be offended,’ said Pen. ‘But remember that it is all your fault.’

‘Would that all my faults were to be rewarded as richly. See here is the Dillington station, and here, too, is Emily.’

‘Well, love!’ said Lady Emily, ‘I am, indeed, glad to see you. Any messages from Aunt Tabitha. I thought not. Oh, you naughty, naughty, naughty girl! So you have come without leave. I must consider how to punish you.’

‘Ah, indeed!’ observed Captain King, as he sat comfortably enjoying a bottle of the deceased Mr. Blunt’s port. ‘Going to the private theatricals, at Kington House, Thomas. Well, I don’t know that I shall want anything more to-night. Ah, indeed. I suppose you will be late?’

‘Pretty well, sir. A ball afterwards for the upper servants.’

‘Dear me. Going in uniform, Thomas?’

‘No, sir,’ said Thomas. ‘Plain clothes, sir.’

‘Dear me, to be sure; yes. By-the-bye, Thomas, I always thought that such a fine-looking fellow as yourself (I wish I had had you in old times for my fogleman), such a fine fellow, six feet three, would never have gone out single-handed.’

‘Well, sir,’ observed Thomas, drawing himself up, and

looking more empty-headed than usual. 'You see, sir, the uniform very splendid, sir. Green, sir, and gold lace; gold shoulder knot, blue waistcoat, and canary inexpressibles! Very chaste, sir. Pay, sir, very good, sir. I shouldn't have demeaned myself, sir, to enter a family in trade, sir, but for that. When I was with my lady, two of us always behind the carriage. Uniform too plain, sir. Common quite; claret coat, sir, and black continuations. Stipend, sir, not paid so regularly as here, sir. A man, sir, will put up with a great deal of bruskerie for regularity of cash payments, sir.'

'Ah, indeed, that is the sort of thing, Thomas, promptness and punctuality. I suppose, now, when single-handed there is less jealousy in the kitchen?'

'*Servants' hall*, sir. *Housekeeper's room*, sir. NOT kitchen! Beg your pardon, sir! Heard from Miss Blunt, sir?'

'Well, no, Thomas. I rather thought that we should have heard before this.'

'Staying at Conyers Castle, sir. Mrs. Trivet, her maid, sir, have been and wrote, sir.'

'Dear me, any news, Thomas?'

'Well, no, sir; only Mrs. Trivet don't like the goings on there. Mr. Tibbits, the butler, sir, not very strict, sir.'

'Ah, well, Thomas, you were saying something about the servants' hall. Favourite, Thomas, in the servants' hall? Eh, Thomas?'

'Yes, sir! Has its advantages, sir, to be single-handed. More valued, sir, by the ladies, in that case. Deal of jealousy, sir, excited when one has a junior, sir. Ladies don't always make nice distinctions, sir, in rank. Nothing like having it all to yourself, sir. Like o' that in the parlour, sir: gentleman, as it might be yourself, sir, more pleasant and private, sir, alone.'

'Ah, Thomas, I need not keep you.'

‘Ah, indeed!’ soliloquised the gallant Captain. ‘Confound the fellow! why has he not more sense than to appear in plain clothes, when at best he will look like a sort of greengrocer who goes out to wait? No doubt some of the women admire that gaudy livery of his. Confound his impertinence! Calling it an uniform, too! —blue, green, and yellow! What on earth could have induced Blunt to extemporise such a thing of a livery? Why! the idiot looks like one of those little Australian birds, only the bird has more sense than to wear yellow breeches. Tab. must have invented it; I know she went to the Ulster King-of-Arms for a grant, for she told me that he would do it cheaper. What a fool to say that she was going to have a grant, lest the herald should come and snip off the ends of her forks and spoons; and before that little devil of a Charley, too! No wonder when they were all out except Miss Gumps he came with that mad sailor Geoffrey Killspindie, with four white horses, court dresses, and trumpeter, demanded her plate, beat out the arms on her watch, which poor Blunt gave her, threatening a *præmunire*, and all sorts of things. So, here is the play bill — capital! That will settle the business at once.’

So the next morning he requested an interview with Miss Gumps; and entering the library, they each sat down by the fire-side — the gallant Captain in a large chair, Miss Gumps on a sort of stool without a back.

‘Well, my dear Captain King, what is it?’ said she.

‘Miss Gumps,’ said he, — ‘or why should not I call you my own darling Tabitha? — summon up all your resolution, my own darling, to bear up against a most unmerited misfortune. Alas, alas! that it should have been my wretched fate to have been the innocent cause of raising one single scandal against that innocent form! Alas, that,

led away by my own selfish passion, I should have remained a day in the house! Oh, Tabitha, my own darling Tabitha! oh, that my insane jealousy should have led me to connive at Pen's visit to Conyers Castle!

'Man, man! what do you mean?' screamed she.

'Am I INDEED to speak, Tabitha? Am I to raise the flush of shame upon that sweet face? Well, oh, well! I never expected that it would have come to pass. Ah, well, as the learned Jeremy Taylor says in his "Holy Living and Dying," "Be thou cold as ice and pure as snow, thou shalt not 'scape reproach." Alas, that wretched Thomas! he said something to me last night of the advantages a single gentleman must have when staying alone with a single lady; he hinted at the unpleasant remarks that had been made. I really believe that Thomas felt it a sort of duty to open my eyes. He appears to consider, that nothing could induce your pure and innocent mind fully to realise the perils of your situation. Indeed, I should not the least wonder if he were to make some unpleasant remark to you on the subject: I *trust* he may *not*. What can be done? Perhaps an immediate marriage *might* stop all remarks. I trust it is not yet too late. On me you may rely.'

At this juncture Thomas entered with a note for Captain King, who, as he read it, gave a sudden start, which was followed by a slightly suppressed groan. The letter was merely a circular from some poultry fancier.

'Thomas,' said he in a stern voice, 'how came you by this letter?'

Thomas, looking very much startled, said, 'A gentleman left it at the door, sir.'

'Indeed,' said Captain King; 'how came he to know anything about it? Has it become so public, and so

soon? You were at the play last night, Thomas,' said the Captain solemnly. 'What was the play-bill?'

'Why, sir,' said Thomas, striving, as servants generally do, to remember the very exact words, 'the first play, sir, when we got in was a farce, sir,—“The Bull in the China Shop,” sir, “or, Having it all your Own Way;” and it was followed by “Clarissa Harlowe, or Outraged Innocence Avenged.”'

Miss Gumps gave a piercing scream, and dropped insensible from her seat.

'O Lor, sir!' said Thomas, 'I hope I haven't done nothink; but I didn't know old ladies was so particular. I'd have called it a cow, sir, if I had known.'

'Thomas, let this be a lesson to you,' said Captain King in a severe tone.

CHAPTER XVII.

‘**W**HAT is that letter which appears to perplex you so, Gerald?’ said Lady Emily to her husband.

‘Oh, a letter from Geoffrey. He wants us to go some four hundred miles, more or less. He has got himself into some mess or other, and he wants me to help him out of it. The “Rhododendron” has just put into Weymouth, or rather Portland Roads. I must go down, I fancy, and I shall want Algernon to go with me.’

‘Indeed! and pray what are Pen and myself to do in keeping a sort of bachelor’s house in the meantime? We won’t stand it, Pen, will we? No! If you go, Gerald, I’ll go; and, more than that, I’ll take Pen. We can go by the 1 P.M. express. And we will stop a night in London. Now don’t look frightened, Pen. My darling shall hide beneath the shelter of her sister’s wings, and if the wicked, cruel old aunt comes, she’ll peck her, won’t she?’

‘Emily, how can you talk so like an idiot! Here am I bothered to death; here is Geoffrey in a desperate scrape with your old uncle; and you talk of making a party of pleasure of it; and off you are to go by the next train. What fun you can see in the affair, I can’t imagine. You need not be surprised if the first thing

that meets your eyes is the sight of Geoffrey swinging from the yard-arm. Perhaps he may get off with a reprimand, or be broke, or something of that sort; and you look forward with the greatest delight to the whole affair as a joke.'

'Well, but, my dear Gerald! Now, don't be angry. I assure you I had not the least intention in the world of vexing you. Of course I had not the least intention of going; I was only in fun. Why not go by yourself?'

'Go by myself? No intention of going? After saying, too, you would go? I like that. And I suppose I am to talk over your old uncle by myself? I fancy so; and he will be in a pleasant humour, too. No; you SHALL go. You are the only one who can manage him at all.'

'Well, but, my dear Gerald!'

'Well, but, it is not my dear Gerald. I hate a woman who can't make up her own mind. And now you are going out of the room with a great laugh upon your face, as if it were the finest fun in the world.'

So saying, the Colonel plumped himself down into one of the huge arm-chairs which mounted guard on each side of the fire-place, and proceeded to glance through the columns of the 'Times;' and having read it very carefully over, threw it aside, declaring, that there was nothing in it, and then, in high dudgeon, walked out of the room.

'Hillo!' said Algernon, taking up the supplement, 'what have we here?'

'“On Tuesday, 22nd, by the Rev. Thos. Smith, Incumbent of St. Dorcas's, by special licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Peregrine King, Esq., late Captain in her Majesty's 16th Lancers, K.A.A., K.B.C., C.B.A., to Tabitha, only child and sole heiress of the late Jeremiah Gumps, Esq., of Sherwood, in the county of Lancaster, and Prospect Villa, Yorkshire, by Jemima

his wife, youngest daughter of Thomas (*olim* Lord Mayor of York). Friends at a distance will be pleased to accept this announcement, as, owing to a heavy domestic bereavement, the ceremony was strictly private."

'Hurrah! Now, Pen, you've gone and been and done it this time. A sort of Cresswell Cresswell inquest. Hanging and matrimony go by destiny, the old proverb says. Only fancy; *uncle* Peregrine. Of course you will be saluted by Uncle Peregrine, and no mistake. By special licence, too! A very long figure,—a fifty or hundred guinea affair. You may be sure Old Perry never paid for it. No doubt he induced your aunt Tabitha to buy it, and then told her that unless she married him at once the money would be wasted. Now, then, out with that letter which you have been hiding in your pocket for the last hour or two; the sting will have been taken out of it by this time.'

So Pen opened her letter, and proceeded to read it aloud to Algernon.

"MY DEAR NIECE,—I have long perceived in your character a strong determination to sacrifice everybody's happiness to your own. And I am sorry to be compelled to inform you that your bold and shameless elopement with Major Conyers, a man of the most mercenary disposition, and incapable of entertaining a real affection, has placed me in so false a position as to compel me to *hasten* my marriage with Captain King, a person in every way worthy of my affection and esteem."

'Good gracious!' exclaimed Algernon, 'what can she be alluding to?'

"It may be some alleviation to your self-reproach to know that in Captain King I have met with one of a truly kindred spirit——"

‘I warrant she has,’ observed Algernon.

‘“ And that the early spring of my youth having passed, I have one to share my now solitary hearth, in the sunshine of whose smile I shall bask for many a blissful day, and shall revel in the placid delights of a home made happy by the genial presence of a gifted and loving companion. I have just snatched a moment’s leisure (though you don’t deserve it) to pen these lines ; and by the time they reach you shall be on my wedding tour with the object of my affections, for whom my regard is of no puerile fancy ——”

‘I fancy not,’ said Pen.

‘“ But the natural result of a long and warmly-cherished admiration of his many charms of person and mind. It is love, pure devoted love ! And I feel confident that your knowledge of my character will lead you to ascribe my motives to their true source. Trusting that you may never have cause bitterly to regret the step you have taken, relative to one incapable of feeling a fervent and honourable passion for you, to be crowned with acceptance and approval, I am, my dear niece,

‘“ Your sincere and faithful aunt,

‘“ TABITHA KING.” ’

‘The woman has evidently gone mad,’ said Algernon.

‘I think I comprehend how the land lies,’ said Pen.

‘I once caught her writing a letter with the aid of a little threepenny book with a green paper cover, called the “Gentleman’s Letter Writer.” She has culled all the sweets relating to matrimony, and strung them together so as to form one *harmonious* whole.’

‘Just as Praxiteles selected the beauties of fifty forms of loveliness to make one Venus,’ said Algernon. ‘Emily is going to have all your things packed for the trip. I

wonder what is the matter. Geoffrey has a wonderful knack of getting into scrapes, and a still more wonderful one of getting out of them again.'

Lord Geoffrey Killspindie was a very fine fellow in his way ; but he had a sad habit of playing practical jokes. Fortunately for him his old uncle happened to be the Admiral at the present time, though, as he hoped to belong to the flag-ship, he would with pleasure have been spared the relationship. He was a fine-looking fellow of about twenty-five, and used to go by the name of Old Jeff. In the naval brigade he had been Peel's right-hand man, and had served under him in the naval war, or rather river war, in India, when Peel went up with his heavy guns. In spite of his relationship, the old Admiral wished him at Hong Kong, and had offered him an advantageous exchange. But Old Jeff was not to be done. He liked his messmates, and did not see the fun of an exchange which might, it is true, get him promotion ; but whose chief recommendation would be to remove him from the neighbourhood of the old Admiral.

Now this was, in his opinion, a one-sided reciprocity. Geoffrey Killspindie had certainly got into a mess. There had been a grand ball on shore, and he had neglected to order his bed at the hotel, and the landlady was obliged to declare that she had not a bed unoccupied. He declared that he would have one, even though he slept in the dog-kennel. That even, she was sorry to say, was occupied. So Old Jeff, having left his things in the bar, went up to the ball-room. Leaving before the ball was over, he ordered the waiter to show him to his room, and the waiter referred him to the chambermaid, whom he desired to show him up to number twenty-six ; and, carrying his traps, he followed her up, took his things off, and got into bed and fell fast asleep.

Now, it so happened that the said room had been taken by Captain Tomkins, Post-captain commanding H. M. S. 'Prodigioso,' a new three-decker, which had just been put into commission; and, much to his disgust, on entering the room, saw Lord Jeffrey fast asleep. Being a choleric little man, he rushed at him and shook him till he awoke him. Jeff, in a fury, dashed at him, upset the wash-hand stand, tied his hands behind him, took him up in his arms like a child, poked his head through the hole from which he had removed the wash-hand basin, making him sit on the rail connecting the feet together, and lashed him securely by his feet with towels to the legs of the stand; having done so, he took him up stand and all, and set him up in the passage by the door; he then rang the bell violently, locked the door, and got into bed again, and was fast asleep in a few minutes.* Captain Tomkins was soon released from his unpleasant situation; but it was quite useless to attempt to awake Old Jeff.

The next day, Lord Jeffrey found himself under arrest, and had it notified to him that he would have to await the sentence of a general court-martial. What was to be done? However, he did not see his course very clearly, nor did the charges against him much enlighten him; for, being very sleepy, he had pretty much forgotten the circumstances of the case.

'Here goes!' said he.

'No. 1. For conduct unbecoming the character of an officer and a gentleman, in being drunk and disorderly on the evening of the 4th; in occupying the room of his superior officer, and refusing to leave it when desired.

'No. 2. For conduct unbecoming the character of an officer and a gentleman, in using insulting language to his

* Founded on fact.

superior officer when requested to vacate the room of his superior officer.

‘No. 3. For conduct unbecoming the character of an officer and a gentleman, in using language tending to provoke a breach of the peace.

‘No. 4. For conduct unbecoming the character of an officer and a gentleman, in striking his superior officer, and imprisoning him in an article of furniture termed a wash-hand stand.’

‘Well,’ said Old Jeff, ‘here is a business. What is to be done? I don’t believe I did anything of the sort. Well, I am in for it this time. What is to be done? I’ll send for Gerald and Emily. What a nuisance, too, just as I wanted a long leave! I do remember something about calling him old tibcat! What an old grampus! What is to be done? Think that I had better say nothing, but cross-examine the witnesses.’

‘And so these are the Portland Roads, are they? And which is the “Rhododendron?” Is that the ship?’ inquired Lady Emily, pointing to the huge ‘Mersey’ lying off the island.

‘No, my Lady, that’s the new frigate, forty 10-inch guns, the heaviest broadside in the whole channel fleet. Forty 10-inch guns! My eyes, she would astonish the French. You’d never think she was so big as she is. She’s thirty feet longer than the “Rhodedendrums,” though she’s a ninety. My blessed eyes and limbs! she’d give Johnny Crappo the stomach-ache. Ax your Ladyship’s pardon.’

‘Well, what is that ship farther off, to the right, with the three lines and a half? Is that another frigate?’

‘Lord love your Ladyship! Bless your heart! that’s the old “Minny Tower” (Minatour), three-decker, 120

guns. Ax your Ladyship's pardon: it isn't, though; it's the "Prodigioso." Rum game on board her the other day. Her Cappen —

‘What's his name, Jack?

‘Oh, ah, Cappen Tomkins. He took a bed at the hotel; and so the house was full, you see: and so you see my Lord Killspindie, liftennant on board the "Rhodedendrums," you see, my Lady, he wants one too, so he goes to the waiting woman, you see, my Lady, and he says he wants half of it; and so you see, he wouldn't take no denial; so she lets him go into the room, Cappen Tomkins, him on board the "Prodigioso." So, you see, my Lord, he gets into bed and goes to sleep, and the t'other chap comes and wants to turn him out. Now Old Jeff, as they calls him in the fleet, wasn't going to be done by a precious land-lubber who had never seen blue water, and so he says, says he, he'll give him half if he likes, and he'll pay for all if he likes, or pay for his grog, which he pleases. So as he wouldn't be reasonable and take his half like a man, he shan't have none; and if he won't turn in, he's blowed if he don't make him keep the dog watch; so he makes a quarter-deck for him, and he hoists him up to the top of the bed-posts, and then he leaves him comfortable as can be.

(‘Jack, bring her head round more to the wind.)

‘We shall be on board the "Rhodedendrums" in less than a quarter of an hour. Fine boats, my Lady! built for the trade; run many a cargo across the Channel; but times is changed now, and blowed if I think we are any the better for it.

‘Well, my Lady, about Old Jeff. Well, he left him there as comfortable as could be, and went to sleep, and he took a pretty good, good spell of it too; then he gets up and dresses and cuts him down. Blowed if the skipper

weren't well nigh mad, and he had him up before a court-martial yesterday. But, bless my heart alive! they all loved Old Jeff, and they would never go for to turn him adrift for a fresh-water sailor, like the skipper of the "Prodigioso;" so we gets a lawyer, all of us, and we sends him just to show him the rights of it: and so says he to Old Jeff, and he says, you prove you was sober, says he, and you thought t' other chap was a robber, and you just hung him up till you wanted him, where you had your eye upon him: and that's what he just did, my Lady. Lord love you! Old Jeff don't get drunk, and when he is a bit obfusticate he allers takes to preaching, it's beautiful to hear him. He ought to have been eddicated a parson; blowed if he wouldn't have taken the wind out of their sails.'

So they sailed through the fleet, and passed under the stern of the huge 'Rhododendron.' Pen was much struck with her magnitude, and wondered at the immense black guns which grinned out of her ports. They came alongside, and one by one mounted the zigzag staircase which led them up on the quarter-deck.

'That raised deck behind us,' said Algernon, 'is the poop. The deck we are standing upon, as far as the mast, is called the quarter-deck. You see it is about a quarter of the upper deck. Those ladders lead up to the poop. Look at the length of the ship—more than three hundred feet from here. Under the poop is the captain's dwelling,—three rooms. Now we will go below. Take care how you go down those steps.' Now, what do you think of her battery? Don't they look like small locomotives? The decks are above seven feet—about a foot above my head. Ah, look! Emily has found Jeff at last. Now follow them into the ward-room. Now, this is a sort of common room for the officers. Its extreme width is the

width of the ship, something like fifty feet wide. From the upper part of the room you will observe a portion has been taken off on each side for the commander and master's cabins. Now come and sit down upon this sofa,—red velvet — smart, is it not? And look out of the stern windows,— what a height we appear to be up! How the sea glitters and sparkles! Look at the number of gulls flying about below us. Does it not make you giddy to look down? The sailors feed them. Look at that fellow: how pleased he is with that piece of biscuit. Now, have you any notion what those huge things are?’

‘Why, cannons, to be sure! Do you think I am *soft*, as the old woman said the other day. But why are they painted white?’

‘In the first place, have the goodness to call them *guns*: there are no cannon on board ship. Cannot you guess why they are painted white? They are so much cleaner.’

‘Well, but what is the meaning of that thing in a case?’

‘Oh, that is the lock. You pull up this brass hammer — now don't touch the trigger-line — here, take this, quick, place it in the touch-hole, there,—now pull! You may well jump; but I fancy that you will see a little practice before long with the great guns from one or two little indications which I have noticed. Now I am going to introduce Emily's brother to you, the young gentleman who was lately so distinguished, not merely in poor Peel's battery in the Crimea and in India, but more recently by making a spread eagle of his superior officer. Hillo, Geoffrey! how did you manage to get scatheless out of your last scrape?’

‘Well, my lawyer was a clever fellow, I suppose, and I had a good cause to defend. I never was drunk in my life. Tomkins was such an obstinate brute, nothing

would persuade him: luckily for me that I was *not* drunk. Well, there's a little cherub that sits up aloft, who keeps watch over poor Jack.'

'Well, that may be, so far as keeping watch over Jack; but I fear he won't keep watch over poor Jeff much longer unless he turn over a new leaf. Hang it, man! why do you play these monkey tricks? bringing poor Gerald and Emily down some three hundred and odd miles, Emily fully expecting to find you swinging from the yard-arm.'

'A nice fellow you are! when you dipped a poor young fellow over head in your plunge bath when he paid you a visit one night. Now, I only put my friend out to dry. But I don't want to be hard upon you, under *present* circumstances. How do you do, Miss Blunt? Emily tells me to introduce myself to you as the interesting victim of an unjustifiable persecution. You probably never saw a ceiling garnished in this way before, with cutlasses between the beams; no wonder you admire it. You see those long poles painted? Those are the sponges and rammers. They are painted different colours on the different decks, for this reason: the 8-inch guns on the lower deck are longer than the 32-pounder guns, and we should be always confounding them unless some such scheme were adopted. They are just going to exercise the men at the guns, if you like to have a shot. We generally practise with four guns at a time. There goes!' as a tremendous report was heard (to compare great things with small), not unlike banging the door of a small lodging-house by the sea-side, which causes the whole house to shake. 'Now, we had some young ladies firing the pivot-gun the other day, so you see it is quite *proper* for you to have a shot, if you like. Very well! will you come this way?' and so they strolled out of the wardroom.

Pen saw a long, low room, some three hundred feet long by seven feet in height, supporting its whole length by a double row of short iron pillars running from end to end, a great many men sitting round small tables here and there. Round the four aftermost guns, next the ward-room, were four small groups, of about a dozen men in each.

‘Here,’ said Geoffrey, ‘stand by gun number two, holding the trigger-line in your hand. Now, they will haul the gun out in a moment, as soon as they have finished loading. Now, take a step with your right foot to one side, look along the tangent sight—this—and just catch the top of the iron spike in the middle of the gun, which is called the dispart; now get them both to bear upon that small object about half a mile off; the men will raise and lower the gun for you; now, when the elevation is correct, you must call out “Well!” and then, if the gun point too much to the right, you must call out “Muzzle left,” and *vice versâ*. Now, then!’

So poor Pen, in a dreadful fright, took hold of the trigger-line in her hand, leant very much over, and Geoffrey called out ‘Elevate.’ Some of the men thrust their handspikes under the breech of the gun and proceeded to elevate, and the gun rose and fell with the most exact steadiness; and to poor Pen’s eyes it always appeared to be above or below the mark; and a gun at her elbow went off with a deafening report, setting every nerve tingling, and she jumped back with a little scream, and the men sniggled. She took another look, but it was further off the mark than ever, and in pure despair she called out ‘All right!’ whereat the men roared. So Geoffrey, seeing her discomfort, looked along the gun, gave one or two directions, called out ‘*Well,*’ and a man standing by instantly slipped a wooden wedge, termed a

quoin, under the breech of the gun. 'Muzzle left;' and the men moved the huge mass of wood and iron to one side as easily as though it had been a plaything.

'Muzzle right! steady, men! now, that will do.'

So Pen gave a smart pull at the trigger-line, simultaneously giving a tremendous spring to one side, sending the man at her elbow head over heels on the deck, whereupon they immediately gave her three cheers!!

'Now,' said Geoffrey, 'if you like to go on the fore-castle you will be better able to judge of the practice; moreover, you will be further from the guns. Now, then, watch the shot; you can see it plainly as it strikes the water. There!'

As the huge shot struck the water close to the target, throwing up a column of water into the air, followed by five or six smaller columns as the ball ricocheted along the surface of the water, as though playing at ducks and drakes for its own private amusement.

'Now take the telescope, and you can watch the ball fly through the air before it strikes.'

'There, that struck the target.'

'No, not quite; you forget we are not in a line with the gun. It went above a yard to one side.'

'How large is the target?'

'What you see is merely a group of small flags. There is a cross formed of two pieces of wood, each about a yard long. To the extremity of each piece one of these flags is fastened; every flag, you will observe, is a foot square. This target is moored about nine hundred yards off, rather more than half a mile.'

'Now, what island is that? Portland, is it not?'

'Yes. Do you observe the likeness to Gibraltar? They intend to make it nearly as strong. One half of it is nearly impregnable, and will be made quite so before

they have done with it. I went over it the other day: they are cutting a dry ditch across it, dividing it into two parts, so wide and deep that nothing but a bird could pass it. The ditch is one hundred feet wide and seventy feet deep; the sides are being scarped. It could be flooded; but is far more formidable in its dry state. They are already building batteries and magazines. You must go over them; you never saw such a place. There is not a level spot on the island but the cricket ground, and that is just like a hog's back—gives you a good idea of the game under difficulties. Of course you are going over them? That bank of sand, almost joining Portland to the mainland, is called the "Chisel Beach." You see it keeps out the West Bay; for all that, the Roads are so still you would probably see breaking upon the beach waves some eight or ten feet high. It always is so with a westerly wind. On the other side runs out the breakwater, some three or four miles, something like one end of a horse-shoe. Now, do you see that small green hill forming the other end of the horse-shoe? You need not laugh, it used to be a *green* hill till the engineers pared it all over. They have just finished making a road through the middle of it. That also will be made into a nest of batteries, and with the Whitworth and Armstrong guns there, and on Portland, and with the ships in the Roads, we might defy a hostile fleet,—aye, sink their ships one by one as they tried to enter. So you see the Roads are defended both by the green or quasi-green hill and the Island of Portland, to say nothing of the breakwater, which will be one huge battery, mounting I don't know how many hundred guns. Nothing like the great guns! Artillery for ever! The land should be full of artillery volunteers. The riflemen have saved the land, no doubt of it; not merely on account of its physical, but its moral effect.

However, we must not think that we have done everything when we have something like one hundred thousand volunteer riflemen under arms; but should there be an invasion the land will be saved by the artillery. The riflemen are taken from the middle classes, and from a most intelligent class of men, too. You would be astonished at the way in which they pick up their drill. I never saw anything like it myself: but we also want to secure additional force from a lower class. I happened to be staying with a friend who has huge works near Manchester, the other day, when I had the opportunity of conversing with some most intelligent workmen, employed in the foundry.

“Are you for joining the rifles?” said I.

“No, my Lord; they are not for such as we.”

“How is that?” said I.

“Why, we haven’t the time, my Lord,” said one of the men.

“Well, but,” said I, “will you join a corps of artillery? You have no idea of the fun there is in hauling about the great guns.”

“Well, my Lord, I’m for artillery, if they have anything of the sort here.”

“Well,” said I, “will your mates join?”

“Yes, my Lord, we’ll all join; every one of us.”

Well, my host, a leading man in that neighbourhood, put himself at the head of the movement; and, in a short time, they got up a corps of eighty men, Government having accepted their services. Now, my idea of an artillery corps is this: horse artillery or field artillery are, in most cases, quite out of the question. Men have no time to practise all the necessary evolutions; but it takes no great time for men to learn the heavy gun drill. I see, for my part, no necessity for all the marching and counter-march-

ing. I should teach the men just as we train the blue jackets; they very soon pick up their drill. I would have in every county abutting on the sea a battery, near a railway station, wherever a proper place could be met with. Of course the seaside is the most fitting place; but we must remember that we have not men by the seaside; that is, no sufficiency of men. But wherever a sufficient range can be met with, — say of half a mile, about the longest distance we practise, — with a hill side to fire against, and in the neighbourhood of one or two large towns, there would I have one or two batteries of artillery. Government could furnish guns enough. In this way I would exercise the men in the management of the great guns; and, in the event of an invasion, the inland towns would leave their guns, and go by special train, at half an hour's notice, to man either the Martello towers or the batteries on the coast. Of course their old-fashioned thirty-twos or sixty-eights would not do to lug about over the country with them; but if they were once well up to the management of these, they would find little difficulty in the working of the Whitworths. Out of the dozen men who have to work one heavy gun, only two or three need be perfect in the aiming and firing. As to the men taking an interest in the drill, you would find it take far more than the rifle drill. Now, our small-arm men, when they muster on the poop for rifle practice, they don't do it with half the zeal which the men attached to the heavy guns show. In the next place, we shall have with our new guns (should any one be bold enough to invade us) to follow the invaders: I mean to hang upon their skirts, firing at them from two to three miles' distance. No force could stand it. Fancy one of Whitworth's light guns, with a pair of good horses, harassing a small body of men, wherever they went.

Firing at any chance groups, they would soon make the roads useless; any foraging would be quite out of the question. I suppose the next thing will be to follow Colt's plan of having a telescope upon the gun. A few nine or twelve pound shells would be a thorough torment to a hostile force. A wasp's nest would be a perfect joke to it. Of course these guns would not be employed like the regular field artillery, and it would, of course, be necessary to keep at a respectful distance from the enemy; and these guns could only be entrusted to picked men. But it would be of no slight advantage to have the coast well defended. The "artful dodger" plan would be a subject for further consideration. Louis Napoleon has stated that his fate will be death in the streets of London. I should not at all be surprised. Should the invasion of England be the last trump in his hand, he will undoubtedly play; but it is just possible that he may find it necessary to follow the example of his predecessors, and *revoke*. Well, if he dies in the streets of London, it will be somewhere in Leicester-square.'

'Like Louis Philippe?'

'Perhaps you may be right.'

'Well, Miss Blunt, all this must be awfully stupid; a very dull subject of conversation?'

'Not in the least, I assure you.'

'Don't you think so, Algernon?'

'Well, I should think so,' coolly observed Algernon.

'By-the-way, hadn't you and Seymour an adventure in Ireland?'

'Yes. Don't you remember? When you declared they wanted to stop your breakfast?'

'Oh, yes; but with your natural talent for exaggeration, surely you can tell the story far better than I can?'

'I dare say. Come, tell it at once; the story is good.'

‘Well, it so happened,’ said Algernon, ‘that we were travelling (for our sins), by coach, through the Emerald Isle; and, on one occasion, stopping to breakfast where they professed to give us twenty minutes, no breakfast made its appearance for about a quarter of an hour. Presently they had brought it in, and we had scarcely sat down before the horn sounded. The waiter informed us, in an excited state, that the coachman was very particular, and would wait no longer. We all protested, but to no purpose. No one would stand by Seymour and myself; but with sundry strong expressions they all paid their money, and left the room. The waiter came in again, and told us that the coachman would not positively wait another moment. We said we could not help it. Very indignant, the waiter left the room. In a few minutes he came back again, declaring that the coachman would give us two minutes more, and if we were not ready then he would go without us.

‘“How on earth are we to drink our tea without teaspoons?” said I.

‘The waiter looked hastily at the table, and rushed out frantically into the street, and brought back all the passengers into the room, and having sent for a couple of policemen, insisted on each person being searched. Such a scene as never was known; such evil speaking, lying, and slandering; such blasphemy as was painful to hear. At one time I really thought that there would have been a battle royal. We took matters very coolly, and finished our breakfasts quietly. Then Seymour suggested to the waiter to look into the teapot, where they were all found, he having previously put them there at my suggestion. And then, seizing time by the forelock, we instantly demanded an apology from the landlord for the insult offered to the passengers; insult added to robbery. Indeed, Seymour

began to be a little doubtful as to the turn matters might take as regarded ourselves, for the coach was heavily laden with Tipperary squireens; and a pump being handy, he suggested that a little cold water might tend to clear the waiter's faculties. I seized him by the collar, a huge farmer laid hold of him on the other side. Some of the other passengers held the landlord in readiness till wanted, the coachman bolted as soon as he saw the turn matters were taking, and the rest of the party proceeded to murder the policemen. I fully expected that we should have got into a terrible scrape for our share of the business; but we heard nothing more of it.'

'They manage these things differently, you see, in Ireland,' said Lord G. 'Well, I think that I shall come on shore with you to-day. I'll just speak to the skipper about one of the ship's boats. Should you like to see the men go down by the Jacob's ladder? You see the rope ladder over the stern? Now, look over. Now do you see how they manage it?'

'Oh, yes, I saw some of them climb up by it. Are they obliged to go up sideways, with a leg on each side of the rope?'

'Well, it could not be managed otherwise. You will, of course, go down as you came up.'

'I suppose there are only two ways?'

'Well, yes, there is a third. You see those bars of wood, about three inches square, with a rope on each side of them? You see they are nailed to the ship's side. That is the intermediate way: not so hard as the Jacob's ladder, nor so easy as the other. A little girl the other day was much puzzled at it; she called it the Noah's Ark way, and thought that it was for the cats.'

We now return to Captain Peregrine King.

He thought a private marriage would suit him, and he

made his arrangements accordingly. Drove down to Doctors' Commons, with Miss Gumps, for the licence. Said he had forgotten his purse; borrowed hers and paid for it; for he knew well that, in the event of any strange emergency, the very fact of her having paid for the licence herself would effectually prevent her backing out of the match, not merely from a not unnatural dislike to waste 'the yellow boys,' as she would term them, but from a keen sense of the absurd position this little pecuniary transaction would place her in. Having succeeded so far, he prevailed on her to invite the Miss Stortons to breakfast; and when they arrived, she informed them that peculiar circumstances, of an official rather than of a private nature, rendered it absolutely necessary that her marriage with Captain King should be at once solemnized, hinted darkly at foreign embassies and ambassadors' wives, and left the young ladies in a great state of bewilderment.

The gallant Captain had made his arrangements with the Incumbent of St. Dorcas's, informing him that the Miss Stortons were to be his intended's bridesmaids, and invited him to be present at the breakfast afterwards; and so the ladies drove to the church, where they were met by the gallant Captain. The bride was given away by Lord Millington, and the two Miss Stortons were yoked for the occasion to two delightfully wicked young Guardsmen, who were previously well known to them by name, though, as is not uncommon with young ladies (who, fully aware of the wickedness of the lords of creation generally, always suppose that their own particular friends and acquaintances are exceptions to the rule), they did not for one moment believe that what they had heard of them could be true.

We must do Old Peregrine the justice to say that he

was a favourite with young men generally. He professed to have no humbug about him, and affected to be a very respectable old screw, knowing well how thoroughly young roués despise an old profligate. As to his being an old screw, he never attempted to conceal it; and to such an extent did his influence go, that when they were with him they rather affected it for the time themselves; though, poor young lads, they had never saved a penny in their lives. Moreover, Peregrine rode like a Centaur, and young men appreciate anything of that sort. His knowledge of horse-flesh was extraordinary, and he was always ready to give good advice, and to help them out of any scrapes in the buying and selling line. We may be well sure, therefore, that he was a welcome guest at the Guards' club.

And so they returned to the breakfast, which was as elegant as money and taste could effect, for as Pen had so recently come of age, her affairs had not yet been settled; the house stood in her name, as the saying is; and under these circumstances, Captain Peregrine King judged it false economy not to arrange everything in the handsomest manner. He made his arrangements admirably: the affair went off well. When the ladies retired, after drinking a due amount of healths, and after Lord Millington and he had plastered each other sufficiently, which thing old fogies *will* do, in spite of their private opinions on each side, Peregrine King packed off, the young men nothing loth, for they found the young ladies heavy in hand.

‘I suppose,’ said he, ‘that one must have all this tomfoolery at weddings? The women think that they can’t do without it; but it’s a great bore to an old fellow like myself. When a man has been once married, he finds it a great bore to have no one to manage matters for him when he is left a widower; everything then goes to rack

and ruin. I can stand it no longer. My wife (I must now I suppose call her) will be up packing, and I shall take the Miss Stortons home in the carriage, for I want to have a talk with their father, who is my wife's trustee; but there's no particular hurry. We may as well finish the wine (which was really splendid) before we separate.'

In the course of the afternoon, he went back with the Miss Stortons, who were of course bursting with the news.

'O mamma,' cried the elder and least affected of the two, 'only think what has happened. Now guess.'

'Oh, she will never guess.'

'Matrimony, mamma.'

'Matrimony?'

'Now guess, who?'

'Surely it must have been a joke about Captain King and Miss Gumps?'

'Oh no, mamma! it is really true. We have been bridesmaids, and two *serious* young Guardsmen, as Papa would call them, were the bridesmen; they were really very nice. Surely all officers cannot be so utterly lost as they would make them out to be. And such a nice old man, Lord Millington, mamma; and he told me that he was also a widower, and wanted a wife, and wished to know what my opinions were on matrimony in general; and talked such nonsense. Said that he had sold himself to the devil; and I asked him if he had made the bargain lately, and he said he had; and I said that he seemed just the man to do such a silly thing: and he turned so red, and everybody laughed so, and said I was quite right. And then he said, that if he had sold himself, Captain King had done so too, and then they all laughed, more than ever: and Miss Gumps, I mean Mrs. King, asked him what he had got for his bargain? and he said an

angel; so she looked as pleased as possible; and Lord Millington said that Captain King always admired *dark beauties*, and he hoped she would keep him in order, for he wanted it, and that although he described himself as her slave, still slaves wanted looking after: and Captain King said, he made the best bargain of the two. Oh, I was nearly forgetting: Captain King said that it was his privilege to salute the bridesmaids, which he accordingly did, and then Lord Millington came up and talked about an old man's privilege; so we drew back, and I said that I knew that he *might* salute the *bride*, but anything else was another matter, at all events he must salute the bride first; and then he made a funny face, and said he could not do it without being paid for it; and then I asked him if Captain King had been paid for it: and then he made another funny face, and asked me what *I* thought of it? and I said I thought that perhaps if he hadn't he would be, perhaps more than he thought. And Captain King looked up from the other end of the room, and said, "There's time yet, my Lord, for in any case a special licence would smoothe away all difficulties."'

CHAPTER XVIII.

BUT to return to our friends the travellers. They soon had enough of Portland Roads, and so they set out homewards, with Lord Geoffrey Killspindie, who had obtained a long leave, and (to use his own expression) marched out with all the honours of war, drums beating and colours flying!

They had proceeded but a short distance on their journey, when the Colonel exclaimed, 'Emily, Emily! here is something that will interest you!'

'Yes, my dear,' replied the lady addressed, 'very pretty, indeed; but fancy wearing such colours, and apple-green with such a sallow complexion.'

'Confound it!' observed the Colonel, 'here am I drawing her attention to an old friend, and her whole heart and soul are set upon a pea-green bonnet! Don't you see your old friend the Bishop? Here, guard, just tell that gentleman in black, with a shovel hat, that my wife, I mean to say Lady Emily Conyers, wishes to speak to him.'

'Yes, my *lord*,' replied the guard, and set off on his errand.

The whole party tittered, and the Colonel, who had a great horror of a joke at his own expense, wondered what

on earth they were all sniggering at? He hated it! An old woman, too, who ought to know better; and Pen was just as bad! Of course, anything absurd in Lady Emily she would copy at once; catch her copying her good qualities. And Algernon, too! a man going to be married! He wondered that he had not more sense. Perhaps he looked upon matrimony as a joke; he would soon find out his mistake!

Geoffrey observed that he thought the engagement a great error upon Algernon's part. He had far better be guided by the Colonel's experience, who had evidently found matrimony *no joke*, and hand Pen over to himself.

However, the Bishop made his appearance, and his visit acted like pouring oil upon the troubled waters.

'Well, Conyers,' said the Bishop, 'I hear that you have been supporting our friend at his church-rate meeting. You heard that the poll terminated in a majority of two to one in favour of the rate? I think that people now begin to feel that there is no more grinding tyranny than mob government. King Stork was bad enough, but King Mob is ten times worse, requiring no time for digestion! and now men, political, not religious dissenters, would legislate for others according to their own Procrustean standard, they would have stopped the majority's taxing the minority—prevented even Churchmen taxing themselves for the support of their own buildings set apart for the service of Almighty God; but yet have insisted upon having some hand in disbursing the funds, even when they themselves were not called upon to contribute; but excused, provided that they were willing to declare themselves Dissenters.'

'Well,' said the Colonel, 'I suppose that they were willing enough to do that.'

‘Not a bit of it,’ said the Bishop; ‘they objected to be stigmatized!’

‘Indeed,’ said the Colonel, ‘a rare instance of modesty. I should have thought that my dissenting friends would have been the last people to feel ashamed of their banner, if ever there were a set of men who professed to be holier and better than their neighbours. I can’t stand such hypocrisy, not I! We must be bold to stand up for the truth.’

‘And yet, Conyers,’ said the Bishop, ‘I hear that you sent them fifty pounds to restore a chapel situate in one of your parishes.’

‘I did nothing of the sort,’ said the Colonel, very indignantly; ‘pray, who told you?’

‘Well,’ said the Bishop, ‘it is hardly fair to give up my authority; but I suppose it is no secret.’

‘Gawaine,’ said the Colonel, looking very much sold, and remembering his former assurances to Gawaine on the subject (not that he had really ever had the slightest intention of giving a farthing to that purpose). ‘Gawaine is always joking,’ said he; ‘I like a certain amount of seriousness in a clergyman’s demeanour.’

The Bishop was much amused, for he was well acquainted with all the circumstances of the case. ‘I should have called Gawaine rather austere than otherwise,’ said he; ‘but when a man, to use a favourite expression of your own, is always pulling a long face in public, I always suspect him as to his private life. Look at the sons of the old Pilgrim Fathers, for instance, and their immediate descendants: never was there such austerity of life in public, never was there such laxity of morals in private life.’

‘Well,’ said the Colonel, ‘I suppose there is a certain amount of action and reaction in disposition and feelings,

a thing to be expected, if not desired. I fancy that we are often obliged to be somewhat indignant, even when we don't exactly feel so. The other day I was going down to Newcastle, and in the train was a stout, elderly German, who offered me a cigar. I told him that he must not smoke.

'He said, "But I vill smoge; it is ver goot for the spleen, for your English vog that gets down my droat;" and then, taking out his watch, he said, "We shall not be at Newcastle till ten minutes past dree."

"We are very late to-day," said I, "and shall doubtless be some three-quarters of an hour late."

"Ver goot! ver goot! I shall smoge dwo segars."

"You will not," said I; "I am a director, and will not allow it."

"Ah, ver goot! and you will not have one? Ver goot!"

'So saying, he took out his watch again, and choosing the largest cigar in his pouch, began to smoke. I demanded his name, and gave him my card.

"Ah, ver goot, ver goot, mein fröend! Then we shall bow when we meet ever again. Ver goot!" and he went on puffing his cigar with great apparent satisfaction.

'Presently he pulled out a card, Baron Von something or other. Having finished his cigar, he then pulled out his watch and his railway guide. He proceeded to compare the two very carefully, and then he lighted another cigar. Well, I could not pass it over, and as soon as the train stopped I had him up before the authorities.

"Ah!" said he, in reply to the charge, "I go to Newcastle. I take my ticket. Ver goot! The book say I get to Newcastle at three o'clock. Ver goot again! Three o'clock come, ver goot! and thirty mile from Newcastle. Ver goot! *Then the time my own.* I agree to

be at Newcastle by three. Ver goot! Here eructor of the line say, 'Non! not good at all to smoge.' Why for not? The time after three *mine own*. Ver goot! I smoge another. Eructor here say non *again*. Why for not? The time mine own. Ver goot!"

'I believe they inflicted some small fine, which my new friend at once paid, saying, "Ver goot! If your chemin de fer is poor, I will give one little contribution."'

'Capital!' exclaimed the Bishop. 'I think that your German friend had the best of it. I don't think that he ought to have been fined at all; he evidently thought that he had justice on his side. Now, men in general have a great idea of *justice*. They will not sacrifice their rights. Consequently, when the Church is attacked, great pains are taken to misrepresent her in every possible way. It is an *institution* of the particular party, as the French say. They have *their* way of doing things, we have OURS. So the Church is compared to Aaron's rod, swallowing the endowments of all other religious denominations, as they express it. Just as in Manchester the other day, when the Bright party wanted to get up a few indignation meetings in favour of the repeal of the paper duty, that city was covered with huge placards, "Shall the Peers Tax the People!!" Rather a *moderate* prevarication, considering the party from whom it originated. So they represent the Church as riding rough-shod over the people, plundering them, and fattening on their victims. Fat rectors and bloated curates: family men! Though the fattening process on 150*l.* or 200*l.* a year is not explained. Now, our object is to instruct the people, placing the true state of the case before them. Hence the value of these Church Defence Associations springing up on all sides over the land. You are, of course, a supporter of that at Dillington?'

‘Well, no, I am not,’ observed the Colonel.

‘Indeed, I cannot understand any one calling himself a Churchman, and yet neglecting to do so,’ replied the Bishop.

‘Well,’ said the Colonel, ‘perhaps I may; but I had merely a *circular* on the subject; and you know one never attends to *circulars*. If you wish it, I will give you a donation? What is it to be?’

‘Well, from you, twenty-five pounds.’

‘Ah!’ said the Colonel, ‘what have you got from Emily?’

‘Nothing at present.’

So the Colonel took out his pocket-book, and turned over three or four notes as a man does when his duty leads him one way and his conscientious objections another.

‘Twenty-five pounds. Well,’ and he took out five bank notes, and held them tight in his hand, ‘do you know,’ said he, ‘I don’t much like the idea of *compelling* a man to do what he has conscientious scruples against doing.’

‘Well, that question can be decided at once,’ said the Bishop. ‘If a man be *compelled* to do a thing in purse or person, his conscience is not violated; for he does not do it *willingly*. That settles the matter.’

‘Well,’ said the Colonel; ‘but suppose that the law makes me pay for what I dislike, and I feel that this is a burden? Relieve me if you can.’

‘This, I own,’ said the Bishop, ‘is a case in which I would do what I could. But what is to be done? We, as Churchmen, are taxed that Dissenters may be buried in unhallowed ground. We are taxed that their marriages may be — no, I cannot call them *solemnized* — in the presence of the Registrar, and not in God’s house. Again, in my own case, I may ask, why am I to be taxed for

This is a burden
 on the Churchmen

schools, I who have neither chick nor child? Certain reasons have made it impossible to light the palace with gas, and yet I am compelled to pay for a gas-rate. And what do you suppose would be said if I were to start a conscientious objection to the gas-rate? The truth is, that when a person becomes a member of society, he has to sacrifice some of his personal liberty.'

'Why is it, then,' said the Colonel, 'that all the best men of the Dissenters have such a bad opinion of the Church?'

'I deny it,' said the Bishop, very indignantly, not thinking that his friend was trying to get a rise out of him as a sort of discount for his 25*l.*, which the Bishop had now transferred to his own pocket-book. 'I deny it! Look at the excellent John Wesley. He said that the Church of England was the purest church in Christendom; and, "if you got nothing but chaff from the pulpit, you were fed with the finest wheaten flour from the reading-desk." Robert Hall said of the Church of England, that she "puts into the lips of her people a form of devotion unrivalled for its purity, its simplicity, and the soundness of its evangelical sentiments." The Rev. Thomas Binney, a man represented as being hostile to the Church of England, in a lecture to Dissenting ministers at Crosby, said: "My friends, we, as Dissenters, must cease to attempt to multiply little men and little interests up and down the country. All that we must pretend to do is to have well-regulated Dissent in our large towns, for the purpose of putting the Church of England right. We can do nothing more than that; for the only community in England which possesses the machinery for evangelising the labouring classes, for diffusing the Gospel throughout the length and breadth of the land—the only community is that Church of England."'

‘Well,’ said the Colonel, ‘I have been waiting with a certain amount of anxiety to hear you launch out in favour of Voluntaryism.’

‘Well! Voluntaryism is (as a friend of mine well expressed it) very well in its proper place, just as a small boat can make a very fair progress against wind and tide when towed by a steamer, but would be utterly powerless to stem the tide unaided. Voluntaryism could do nothing without the Establishment; just as Dissent could do nothing without that rivalry which is its support.’

‘Without the Church, Dissent must succumb to Romanism, or Infidelity, or to the two combined. One comfort is, that they would roast our Dissenting friends first; the Low Church party would come next; then the Moderate men, the High Church, and the Puseyites, and a grand purification of All Saints, Margaret-street,’ observed the Colonel. ‘You, my dear friend, are too thin to make a good blaze. I should be sorry, too, to see my new church perverted; its altars, not thrown down, but raised up to the Queen of Heaven!’

‘Now,’ said the Bishop, ‘I strongly recommend to you a pamphlet by that eminent Nonconformist lawyer, Mr. Toulmin Smith, a man of great legal research, great abilities, and, lastly, of great piety and earnestness, to be had at the Church Defence Association, Manchester.’

CHAPTER XIX.



HE left Captain Peregrine King with Sir Ezekiel Storton, in his private room at the bank.

‘Well, Sir Ezekiel,’ said Captain King, ‘I have called to receive your congratulations on my marriage. I believe the lady, whom I may term the LATE Miss Gumps, is an old friend of yours. Moreover, I believe you to be her trustee.’

Sir Ezekiel looked at him for a second or two without speaking, and then replied —

‘You have certainly taken me somewhat by surprise. The wedding appears to have been a little sudden, particularly when we take into consideration the ages of the high contracting powers. As Mrs. Peregrine King’s trustee, you will not be surprised at my observing, that it is not unusual to expect the lady’s fortune to be settled upon herself?’

‘Oh, no,’ replied the Captain. ‘Being childless, I am quite disposed to settle the whole of her property upon herself, reserving the life interest for myself. I fancy that the bulk of it, some sixty thousand pounds, remains in your hands. You are, I believe, the head partner? In what is the money invested?’

‘In Exchequer bills,’ replied Sir Ezekiel.

‘Well,’ said Captain King, ‘I should be glad of the

money. There is a large property to be sold, which joins my own; the price asked is eighty thousand pounds. The estate I will settle upon Mrs. King.'

'It is a large sum,' observed Sir Ezekiel; 'and, as the lady's trustee, I should have hesitated; but, perhaps, under present circumstances, — well, there is a balance in our hands, in your wife's favour, in addition to the sixty thousand. You can draw upon us for whatever you want. Would it not be well to pay the twenty thousand into our hands, and we can give their attorney a cheque for eighty thousand? or in any way you please. How will you have it?'

'To tell you the plain truth,' said Captain King, 'Mrs. King has such peculiar ideas, that unless matters had been at once arranged, the property would have been sold to another bidder. As it is, the money must be paid by to-morrow.'

'Well,' said Sir Ezekiel, 'you have only to draw upon us for the sixty thousand whenever you please.'

'Very well. However, to be plain with you, Sir Ezekiel, the property belongs to my neighbour, Colonel Conyers, who, though believed to be wealthy, is, between ourselves, deeply involved. He is rather odd, as you perhaps know. He insists upon payment being made in Coutts's notes: a queer fancy; but I suspect some trick. However, a cheque on Coutts's will set matters right.'

'Set matters right! Captain King, what do you mean, sir? Your behaviour is very extraordinary. If you have a taste for such things and, pardon my saying so, there appear to be very few things for which you have not a taste, being possessed of a mind for which nothing is too great, nothing too little, like the elephant's trunk, which can pick up a straw or uproot an oak — I can show you an interesting sight. Just come with me. Now, do

you see that pile of Exchequer bills? Should you guess their value? Somewhere about a quarter of a million. Wonderful that so large a sum should be represented by such a pile of envelopes. Ah, here — see, this represents Mrs. King's fortune. Sixty-two thousand pounds.'

'Indeed,' said Captain King, taking up one of the envelopes, and pitching it into the air in the most playful way. 'Faith, the sight makes one young again.'

He missed it, and it fell at his feet with a certain amount of force; and the envelope having been loosely fastened, burst open, and the floor was deluged *with blank sheets of white paper!!!* Sir Ezekiel turned actually livid. Captain King watched for a second or two in silence, with a grin that was perfectly diabolical in its cunning.

'Ah,' said he, 'I thought that you bankers were more careful! You are a fine fellow to talk to me about method. I think that if I were a senior partner in your bank I should *cashier* your cashier for his carelessness. I dare say, now, you never counted the packets of Exchequer bills? However, as you were suggesting, a cheque upon Coutts's *will* be the best plan. My carriage is at the door; you can write it there.'

So saying, Captain King put his arm through Sir Ezekiel Storton's, drove to Coutts's, and cashed Sir Ezekiel's cheque, put Sir Ezekiel down at his private residence, and then paid in the amount at his own banker's.

'He must get up early in the morning,' said he, 'to catch me napping.'

Half-past three in the morning, and Sir Ezekiel Storton still sat in his large morocco library chair, his elbows on the sides of the chair, his head on his hands; the scene in the bank parlour ever present before him. He had surprised his wife and daughters the night before by

the vivacity of his conversation, retiring at twelve to his library, having business, he said, to occupy him; and in truth he had.

Could he trust Peregrine King? Certainly he had no earthly interest in exposing the state of affairs; but sooner or later the blow must fall. A few days, more or less, might elapse, but there must be a full and complete exposure before long. If the money could be recovered from Peregrine King; ah, then! — but how was it to be done? He had some landed property, certainly; but would it suit Peregrine King to take it? Perhaps it might; but that would afford mere temporary relief. Yes, he might in that case weather the storm. Then his wife and tenderly-nurtured daughters — cast out penniless — he could not bear the thought; and his mind, preternaturally active, conjured up before him scenes of sorrow and disgrace; and he mechanically opened a small brass-bound case, and examined the lock of an old-fashioned pistol, one of a brace which had belonged to his father.

However, he closed the box again. ‘Ultima ratio Regum,’ said he to himself; and then he walked about the room again for a short time; and then he again sat himself down, and crouched down even in his chair as one on whom the weight of the whole world pressed.

‘Well, they do not hang for that sort of thing now — penal servitude for life!

‘The convict’s daughters!’

And so he went on.

Did he think of the daughters of other fathers, men who would be ruined when the tidings of his insolvency should be publicly known? Insolvency? — aye! but he could not bring himself to make use of a *harsher* word. Insolvency! — well, others had been as bad. Perhaps it might yet be made all right. Why not leave England at

once? Well, let him see what might be done with Peregrine King.

And four, five, and six o'clock struck, and still he crouched in that large chair, gazing on the remains of the fire smouldering in the grate. And next the sound of servants moving about the house was heard, and unwilling to be surprised by any one, he walked softly up to his dressing-room, took a bath, dressed, and somewhat refreshed went out for a walk round the Parks; and feeling himself again, came home to breakfast, and wrote a note to Captain King, saying that he would call upon him on business that afternoon.

His spirits had now risen wonderfully. He knew his man. Peregrine would rise, to a dead certainty, at a mortgage paying six per cent. interest on admirable security. Why had he not thought of this last night? Surely there was now no room for fear, doubt, or uncertainty. No man would be more welcomed in the United States, or Dis-united States. Aye, a double chance! Which would he go to? They would find him tolerably sharp.

Yet did it never occur to him that there was a 'Power that shapes our destinies, rough hew them as we will?' Not he: with holy words ever on his lips, and a lie in his heart — looked up to and respected by earnest and God-fearing men of his own party, he was practically an infidel — he was himself his own God. How true is it that holy things harden the heart they cannot soften! Oh, dull and insensate soul, seared with a hot iron, did no one thought of regret pass through thy mind at the thought of the widows and the orphans thou hadst made orphans indeed? That the sword was already drawn from the sheath, and that the dark and disastrous clouds of ill-omen sweeping over thee, and casting their gigantic shadows on

thy heart, were, as it were, thy last calls to repentance? Last night thou sawest these things in their true light; but now?——

So that afternoon he went to Portland Place, and found Peregrine King alone in the drawing-room. Some of the furniture he had removed, in right of his wife; but the huge picture of Pen still hung in its accustomed place, and with its massive frame looked more overwhelming than ever, a beautiful console full of old china, which ordinarily stood under, having been removed.

The gallant Captain had just been seeing to his antique swords, and was at that moment polishing the cup-hilt of a beautiful long Toledo with a piece of wash-leather. The blade was nearly four feet long within two or three inches, rather more than one inch in width, adapted for striking or thrusting, as was usual during the Elizabethan period, and sharp as a razor. But his favourite weapon was a magnificent sword, closely resembling those on the effigies in the Temple church: the long, wide blade some three inches or more in width; the short cross guard, and heavy wheel pommel; the blade thin with constant cleaning, but still massive and ponderous — few arms able to wield it single-handed. This sword was his pride, and I doubt very much whether he would have sold it even to Millington — certainly not under a very heavy consideration.

‘I was rather anxious,’ said Sir Ezekiel, ‘to see you about an investment. You were talking about some property, I think of Colonel Conyers’; I fancy a mortgage, or something of the sort. Now, I think that I can help you to a vastly better thing. Mrs. King having been an old client of the firm, I should be glad to give you the offer of it; the security unexceptionable, to pay six per

cent. interest: 80,000*l.* or more (on mortgage), the estate worth 100,000*l.*'

'Well,' said Captain King, who saw through his man, 'I am agreeable. Who is the man? where is the estate? and what is the name of it?'

'Well, to be plain with you, Captain King (I speak to a man of business), at certain junctures, even to the oldest established firms, 60,000*l.* is rather a large sum to draw out, and during the present crisis we are anxious to have our full supply of capital available. Three houses gone to-day. Heaven knows where this panic will stop, or what damage it may do. Storton Court, in your own neighbourhood, is the estate; you know it well.'

Old Peregrine's eyes gleamed with delight; he had long wished to have the place, and he saw through Sir Ezekiel at once.

'It's up and over the border,' said he to himself. 'Well, mortgage or sale,' said he; 'which is it to be? I have the money ready for either; but,' continued he, with an indistinct vision of building sites in the far distance, Storton Court not being far from a certain small town, rapidly increasing; '40,000*l.* will be the outside for a mortgage, I fancy. What do you value the property at?'

'About 100,000*l.*'

'A hundred thousand! I should have said nearer 80,000*l.*'

'Well, Tidmarsh valued the property for me a short time ago, and I can send you his valuation. Have you 100,000*l.* ready?'

'Certainly not, and I don't intend to give it.'

'Have you 80,000*l.* ready?'

'Well, with Mrs. King's fortune (I suppose,' said he with a grin, 'we must still pay her the compliment of

calling it hers); with her fortune and —— well, in three days' time I could have the 80,000*l.* ready.'

'Here stands your surety for sixty odd thousands,' said Sir Ezekiel, with a grin, pointing to a massive iron safe which stood almost immediately under Pen's portrait.

'And it might be in worse hands,' retorted the Captain, with a pleasant smile. 'Payable on demand, eh?'

'Good landed security, or what once might have been termed landed security, before it left the womb of our good mother earth, and not bearing bad interest either.'

'Do you know the Cleveland Hills? I might have bought as much as I liked of that land at next to nothing an acre, and now it is all iron. Not much of that at Storton, I fancy. Do you know Middlesboro?' and the old man almost groaned when he thought that had he suspected the existence of iron he might have been worth millions instead of a few tens of thousands. 'Well,' continued he, 'when the deeds are ready, you can have cash on delivery. Come, now! have you not the papers ready? Were you not about to mortgage the property to —— well, never mind to whom. As I said before, the money is ready for a mortgage, up to the full value; it is pretty much like a purchase. I happen to know a little about the value of the property. There is such a thing, I fancy, as transferring a mortgage. Well, what is the most you want?'

'Well,' said Sir Ezekiel, 'money is said to be the root of all evil; but of one thing I am very sure, that in a monetary crisis, the want of the "ready" is the source of all discomfort. What money do I want? May I, without indiscretion, inquire what our mutual friend in the corner is good for. Will he *cut up* pretty decently to his heirs and assigns for ever?'

'*Pretty* decently,' replied the Captain.

'He had need,' said Sir Ezekiel, 'if his profligate heir

indulges in a taste for the fine arts. Now, what is the value of this?' said he, taking up the long Toledo which the Captain had been busily employed upon as he entered the room.

'Well,' said the Captain, 'it ought to be worth ten pounds.'

'Where did you get it from?'

'Well, if you really wish to know, I'll tell you. I got it between Shoreditch and Islington somewhere. Millington takes what I don't want. He takes them at his own price, which happens to be indentical with mine. Just be careful with that sword.'

'Anything peculiar about it?'

'Why, yes, you see that the blade does not taper to a point, but is nearly as wide at the point as the handle. I very much doubt its being the same date as the cup hilt; but they always had a fancy for old blades. To my mind, this blade belonged to the Estoc class; date Philip and Mary, and is curious, as retaining the original point. You observe that the point, taking the base and the sides, forms an obtuse angled triangle, the sides slightly hollowed and sharp as a lancet. You see that it cuts like a chisel. You have made three cuts in the carpet already.'

'I am very sorry.'

'Not that it matters in *the least*, the carpet is Miss Blunt's. Moreover, I fancy that the furniture will all be sold, as they will probably live in the country at an old place of Algernon Conyers's, and the things will have to be sold by auction, *caveat emptor*, you know.'

'Well, as you were saying you have a certain sum in readiness, in the safe, let me know how much it is exactly.'

'Very well.'

So the gallant Captain produced the key of the safe, opened it with some difficulty, and took out a bundle of papers. Some small coin or other dropped out of the

bundle and rolled under the surbase by the side of the safe; he went down on his knees, and looked carefully under the edge of the carpet. At this instant Sir Ezekiel made a pass with the rapidity of lightning at the cord by which Pen's portrait was suspended. Down it came on the devoted head of the old man, smashing one of the corners of the massive frame, weighing some hundred-weights, against the iron safe, and splintering the wood to shivers. Holding the long Toledo in his hand, he gazed for a few seconds on the prostrate form of the old man, as, after a few struggles, the figure ceased to writhe, and presently a thin scarlet stream began to flow towards the fireplace, and the autumn light sparkled and glistened on the red stream as it took its serpentine course, onwards and onwards, till the rivulet of blood seemed instinct with life, hurrying onward to bear its silent testimony from the earth against the murderer. And Sir Ezekiel bent over him, and watched him breathlessly, and faster and faster flowed the tide of life; and then the cord caught his eye, and he took the two cut ends of the cord in his hand, and proceeded to unravel them, and to rub them together, so as to give them the appearance of a natural fracture.

And then a strange fancy took him that somebody was at the windows opposite, and that persons had watched him, and that the police were in that window, and that the avenger of blood was pointing him out to them; and he goes to the window, but no, the blinds in the opposite house are down. And turning round, he is startled at the sight of the murdered man, the blood running down his ashy pale face, glowering at him, whilst he supports himself by the cross handle of the heavy Norman sword.

One must die! saw Sir Ezekiel at once, and he brought up his long sword to the rapier guard (and he had been no contemptible pupil of old Angelo's). For a moment

or two he felt undecided, till he observed that the old man's eyes grew brighter and brighter; then hesitating no longer, he sprung at him. The old man warily kept the heavy round table between himself and his foe, Sir Ezekiel lunging furiously at him, the old man contenting himself with parrying the thrusts in *carte and tierce*, for which the great width of his weapon was well adapted; till finding his full strength returning, and the feeling of approaching paralysis going off, he made one or two sweeping cuts with both hands at Sir Ezekiel's face. They came *very near* him, and he was only able to save himself by springing back. And now holding his long rapier low, and keeping his body well out of reach of the heavy sword, he followed the old man cautiously round the table, each feeling that one thrust would now probably decide their fate. And the light vanished from the red stream as Sir Ezekiel passed by it, and it no longer was red, but black as Erebus; and as, cat like, he crouched after his victim, his left foot slipped in the stream, now red again as the white daylight fell upon it, and he slipped on one knee. The old man, taking one long step forward, with one sweep of his double-handed sword round his head, brought it down with the whole strength of his sinewy arms on the upturned face of his treacherous foe. The keen edge struck him on the forehead — through flesh, through skull, through brain, through skull again, the ponderous blade cleft its way.

And the old man is now alone; and beneath the table is lying a mass of lifeless clay, and a thick, heavy, black fluid is rolling out from that bleeding earth, and the red stream springs upon it, licking it with a thousand tongues of sparkling light, as it hurries it onwards.

And the old man throws the papers into the safe, and worn out, lays himself down to rest; and by-and-bye a

woman's form bends over him, and then the street is carpeted from end to end with excited white faces, and a strong body of police are marching two and two to the house, and they return bringing with them on a litter an indistinguishable mass, covered with cloaks, and the crowd draws back as they approach.

CHAPTER XX.

‘ O this is Manchester?’ said the Bishop; ‘I must stop here, having some business to transact. I don’t mind coming on to Conyers Castle, if you will not take no for an answer, Conyers. But why not stop here? With your fondness for the study of projectiles, run down to Southport, and see the Whitworth guns. You will find it a sight well worth seeing. Perhaps I may go with you.’

‘Well,’ said the Colonel, with a grave smile, ‘if you will come to give respectability to the party, I don’t mind — of course, if the rest are disposed to come. The question before the meeting is, that the present party proceed to Southport. Those in favour, &c., will hold up their hands. *I thought so!* always ready to waste money!’

‘So this is Southport, is it?’ they exclaimed as they entered one of the principal streets of the town.

These Lancashire seaports — Blackpool, Southport (I fancy), Fleetwood, and one or two others — bear a strong sisterly resemblance to one another, having this noticeable characteristic, that they are unlike any other towns on the face of the earth; reminding one somewhat of those old country houses of the Renaissance period, extensively grafted upon, and luxuriating in blossoms of every

wonderful style of debased and composite architecture which Fuseli's hæpatic brain could devise or transatlantic heart desire. Perhaps the most remarkable portion of the town consists of a long street of low, two-storied cottages, each having a small grass plat in front, separated from the sandy road by old-fashioned railings, painted white.

But we must not imagine for one moment that the place has a deserted appearance. Not a bit of it! Thanks to cheap trips, and other abominations, the place is CROWDED. The 'Southports,' a vehicle peculiar to the place, swarm! passing hither and thither in every possible direction. Once set your eyes on a 'Southport,' and you will never forget it: an EXTRAORDINARY vehicle! with a body not unlike the curious swings one sees at a large fair, which a man turns with a handle, and winds you up to a perilous height, only the body of the 'Southport' is far more clumsy; it runs (when the steeds can be induced to get up something beyond a walk) on four low solid wheels. In short, the whole vehicle reminds one much of those curious chariots one's uncles and aunts used to bring one as presents some thirty years ago, costing some fourpence sterling.

These carriages are drawn by donkeys, harnessed three abreast, and manage to accommodate some two or three stout elderly ladies, with children *à la discretion*.

'Here, my man! what will you take us to the practising ground for?' said the Colonel.

'Wait for you there, sir?'

'No!'

'Three and sixpence, sir!'

'How's that? What's the distance?'

'About three miles and a half!'

'Don't believe it! We'll walk.'

Which they proceeded to do, and found the distance, as

they had supposed, much under two miles, for they walked it in thirty-five or six minutes, through the heavy sand.

Talk of desolation in the abstract! Go to Southport, and walk on these sands, and you will realise it to the full. To your left, a low range of sand hills; to your right, a comparatively narrow plain of sand, a mile or more wide, and then a slender ribbon of sea line. In front of you sand; nothing but sand! Sand, sand, sand, for the next six or seven miles. On! on! nothing but sand, with here and there the bleaching skeleton of some huge sea-bird. Presently they come upon an assemblage of people, two small marquees, and four remarkable-looking guns — the eighty-pounder, the twelve, the three, and the one-pounder; the eighty-pounder mounted on a ship carriage, the others as field-pieces. The first, a huge mass, ten feet long, and weighing four tons. It looked much larger than the sixty-eight pounder pivot gun used in the service. The bore was somewhere about five inches diameter. The shot resembled a nine-pin, terminating in a point at each end, that at the base being blunter than that at the other extremity; some sixteen or eighteen inches in length, and, in the middle, six-sided, and made to fit the bore easily, so as to allow the proper windage.

Mr. Whitworth stated that a single sheet of paper would fill up the vacuum. The guns were all breech-loaders, having this peculiarity, that the breech screws over the bore, not into it like the Armstrong. The breech swings backwards and forwards on a hinge, and is closed with a sharp turn of the hand, forcibly bringing to one's mind the oven door of a kitchen range, which a ticket porter at Rochdale one night was discovered opening and shutting again with a loud bang. The poor fellow had left his bed in a fit of delirium, and kept calling out in a loud voice —

‘Get out here for *Heywood! Bury! Bolton! Ebdon Bridge!*’

So ‘the oven door’ was banged to, three or four rapid turns given to the handles, and the breech was at once in its place.

The gunner of H.M.S. ‘Excellent’ lays the gun (the 80lbs.) at point blank range at one degree, a sharp pull at the trigger line, a deafening report, and the huge missile is seen a quarter of a mile off, rushing through the air, with the sound of an express train. After skimming through the air, about a yard above the ground, for some 700 or 800 yards, it strikes the sand, and, ricochetting, strikes again some 200 yards further on. Ricochet follows ricochet, till, after some eight or ten gigantic leaps to the right hand, it is lost in the sea.

Then there was some admirable practice made with the twelve-pounder, a long elegant-looking piece, mounted as a field-piece; a long cylinder of iron without rings, or anything to break the line from breech to muzzle. The diameter of bore was exactly three inches. The shot resembled that of the eighty-pounder, and was about eleven inches in length, if not twelve. Diameter of breech, about eight inches. Length, between eight and nine feet. We saw only one shot taken to try the extreme range, and that was one of the last, fired at the angle of thirty-five, and the shot fell at between 10,000 and 11,000 yards, a distance of nearly six miles. The duration of the flight of the shot or bolt was exactly forty seconds!

The three-pounder was about two yards in length; rather thicker than a man’s arm at the breech; diameter, an inch and three-quarters. Several shots were made from this gun.

But the chief interest was felt in the one-pounder, which was tried for the first time to-day. What would

it do? Would it, in accuracy of fire, eclipse the Whitworth rifle used by the Queen, which, at between 300 and 400 yards, struck the bull's eye one inch above the centre. It looked a mere toy after the twelve-pounder; even much more so after the eighty. The diameter, too, of the bore, just an inch and three-eighths, appeared absurdly small; the gun itself scarcely larger than a telescope, and some five feet in length, mounted as a field-piece on a remarkably light carriage, the wheels of which appeared slighter than the wheels of a pony phaeton. There was no target to fire at, but a long line formed by driving stakes into the ground, extended itself for some miles. Over this line was the one-pounder fired, with a sufficient elevation to give it half a mile range. Some seven or eight shots were fired; and it was ascertained that four of the shots had fallen on the very line itself. Moreover, there was a strong side wind, for which allowance had to be made in aiming. The other shots were very near the line.

‘The result of these experiments,’ said the Colonel, ‘proves that Mr. Whitworth’s rifled cannons are as remarkable in precision of fire as his rifles, and that their range is in proportion to their size.’

‘To what is their wonderful precision to be attributed?’ said Lady Emily.

‘Why, to the extraordinary accuracy of their construction. They are bored (out) and rifled by machinery, and to prove to you the extreme nicety of Mr. Whitworth’s workmanship, he has constructed a machine so sensitive, that it will register the slightest movement, and measure to the thousandth part of an inch. Mr. Whitworth can prove, by this particular instrument, the exact degree of expansion communicated to a bar of iron by the heat of the hand.’

‘Well,’ said Lady Emily, ‘we have long known ourselves to be the best mechanists in the world; but what advantage will it be to us in war? How can this be made to stand us in good stead?’

‘In this way,’ said the Bishop, ‘it will tend to economy of numbers. We shall have a finer army, with far fewer men. The machine will be better, though a number of useless contrivances have been taken out of it. Just as we have discarded a host of things from our modern steam-engines, which were once thought necessary. We shall be able to make the most of the finest material in the whole world!—instead of having to double our regular army, so as to keep pace with the increasing armaments of the Continent. And thus unrivalled mechanical skill, added to those other elements of greatness necessary to a warlike people, will stand us in the stead of numbers.’

‘True! but without education how are we fully to avail ourselves of these advantages?’

‘I answer, by “solid education.” Look at the volunteers of the present day, equal in most respects to our finest regiments of the line. Old soldiers will tell you that they march as steadily as the Foot Guards themselves. In our fathers’ and grandfathers’ time the volunteers of those days were looked upon as rather a joke than otherwise. In the neighbourhood in which my father lived, instead of inspiring respect and admiration by their extraordinary steadiness and soldierly bearing, they were received with roars of laughter by the regulars. Every man carried his musket on the wrong shoulder! A great deal of nonsense was talked against the volunteers at first, by men who ought to have known better; but if they have not yet seen the error of their ways, at all events they have learned to be *silent*.’

‘But what has this,’ said Lady Emily, ‘to do with Whitworth’s guns and rifles?’

‘This much. If you have any very beautiful machinery placed under your care, you must learn how to manage it; otherwise all this accuracy is thrown away upon you, if you cannot appreciate it. And the more a man educates himself, the more valuable member of society does he become, the more excellent a son of his fatherland; and I trust that the day will come when every young man will become a member of something in the shape of a Mutual Improvement Society (whatever name it may be called then), and every member of a Mutual Improvement Society be as well able to use his rifle as our forefathers did their bows and arrows; not for the sake of foreign conquest, but for the defence of our beloved Queen and country! And then, as we have been termed a nation of shopkeepers, we shall be able to pay down, at sight, any one who may be rash enough to attack us, “in full of all demands.” A great man said the other day, it would be difficult, provided they were dressed alike, to tell the volunteers from the regular army. I hope that, should there be an occasion for taking the field, the volunteers will have still improved.

‘At the great shooting match at Wimbledon, some months ago, the shooting with the Whitworth rifles was thought very extraordinary. Our volunteers were matched against some of the best shots in the world, and beat them at long ranges. But at Southport the other day, after the lapse of a few months, they had improved so wonderfully in rifle shooting, that they had, with very little more than half the number of shots, gained quite as high a score as at Wimbledon.* Now,’ continued the Bishop, ‘another

* 1860.

advantage of this movement is, that it brings together all classes. You will find in the same regiment the sons of the highest and the lowest. The peer of the realm, the country gentleman, the lawyer, the doctor, the manufacturer, and the mechanic, men who can use the rifle as well and skilfully as the shuttle. I trust that the day has now gone by when those silly insinuations of cowardice, such as were made by a foolish individual at the Free Trade Hall, are likely to be repeated.

‘As a general rule, all Englishmen are constitutionally brave, the higher orders as well as the lower. There was a time, in England’s history, when discontented men took up the sword against their lawful sovereign and crowned king. But hear the testimony of Cromwell as to the effect of station, character, and, last but not least, education. Never forget that education has its full effect; or the motto of the good old William of Wykeham, who built Winchester School, and New College, Oxford: “Manners (that is, education and behaviour) maketh man.”

‘“We cannot tell what days may be coming over the land; but of one thing I am sure, that those young men will prove the most valiant soldiers of their Queen, the most gallant sons of their fatherland, the first to come forward in the hour of need, *who take pains, by educating themselves, to render their service the most effectual, when the hour of need arrives.*”

‘There can be no doubt of the great advantages we possess, nationally, in our unrivalled mechanical skill, and the benefits afforded to us thereby in the day of battle; but that, nevertheless, these advantages may be thrown away from want of education. But if the young men of the present day take advantage of the numerous opportunities of instruction *showered* upon them, and in a way that

would have astonished our forefathers; if they avail themselves of all means of gaining knowledge, then will they be prepared, through the mechanical skill of this great country, for all that can possibly happen; for it is only when we are too strong for attack that we can be certain of peace. But let us not suppose that we are truly learned, even when we have acquired all worldly knowledge. There is another wisdom that cometh from above — the knowledge of the Lord. Soon will angelic armies come to take possession of all the world. Who can tell how soon? Let us rejoice to remember, "That in that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah." We have a strong city; Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.'

'True,' said Lady Emily. 'But, as you say in this life we must provide for the things of this life, national dangers must be averted. And certainly Mr. Whitworth so far, has deserved well of his country; and Manchester ought certainly to support him.'

'Without entering at all into the relative merits of the Armstrong and Whitworth guns, as we have a *Sir* William Armstrong, so ought *Mr.* Whitworth to give place to *Sir* Joseph Whitworth. If you have had enough of this banging, let us return to Southport!'

'Storton, Hanson, and Capias. — Stoppage of Storton, Hanson, Capias, and Co. — Death of *Sir* Ezekiel, the senior partner. — Rumoured suicide of Hanson.'

Such were the tidings which met the ears of the Conyers' party at the Great Western Station. Third edition of the 'Times,' with all the particulars!!

'Good gracious!' exclaimed Pen, 'he is my trustee.'

‘Totally insolvent,’ said Colonel Conyers, running his eye down the columns of the ‘Times.’ ‘Assets absolutely nothing. A large sum paid out, a few days ago, to a certain Captain Peregrine King. Not sixpence in the pound. Exchequer bills made away with. Envelopes filled with blank sheets of paper. Dear me, how very terrible! Surely, Pen, you have nothing in his hands?’

‘My whole fortune! every penny I have in the world, except a few sovereigns in my purse! What *shall* I do about my bills!’

‘Here’s a pretty to-do!’ said Colonel Conyers to his wife, as he was preparing to retire for the night, with the door that communicated with his wife’s room sufficiently open to admit of an occasional remark. ‘Well, you’ve done it this time, and no mistake, Emily!’

‘What do you *mean*, Gerald?’

‘What do I *mean*! What should I mean? Algernon and Pen, to be sure; it’s all your doing. What are they to marry on, I should like to know. Love, I suppose, and a child every year, till they get a regular parson’s family, being the only clerical live stock that does increase; and then debt and difficulties! Now, remember, I wash my hands of the whole affair. Don’t say that I did not warn you over and over again *not* to have that girl here. I can do nothing for Algernon, of course I cannot. Why should he not turn parson? There’s the new church I am building, of course he could have that; and after all, that is only six hundred a year. What is that to a man of Algernon’s tastes and habits?’

‘Well, but,’ my dear Gerald, ‘Algernon must learn economy. You know that he is a man of great energy and decision of character.’

‘Great energy and decision of fiddlesticks! I know him better than you do. Algernon indeed!’

And the gallant Colonel went on to predict every evil that could fall to the lot of man, in a decided and convincing manner, such as only a man’s own relations can adopt. Other people weigh the chances and balance the probabilities; one’s own relations never do. They ring one’s knell in anticipation. ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’

Lady Emily said nothing: she had a scheme of her own.

‘Pen, come and talk matters over,’ said Algernon, coolly taking her by the arm, and leading her into the conservatory. ‘You have good sense, and an immense amount of character, as I shall probably experience hereafter. We cannot marry on three hundred a year and an old house, unless by farming, or something of the sort, we could considerably increase our income. You will not get one penny back from that rascal. Gerald wants me to take orders, a thing quite out of the question. Now, what is to be done? I can’t see just at present. Emily won’t be sorry so far, for it will give her a pleasant companion for some months: but, with influential relatives, something or other will soon turn up. You chose a poor man, love! in the first instance, and you must not complain if you find poverty a very different thing to what you have been accustomed to. I always feared that something or other would occur to disturb the even flow of our fortunes. No man can have everything in a wife, and if he meet with beauty; and every good quality in a wife constituting true riches (the gold stamped with God’s image and superscription), ought he to repine if only a competency can be secured, when that which has been

stamped with Cæsar's vanishes? My own darling! I am talking to you very plainly, just as if you were already my wife. I disliked the idea of your huge fortune and the obligations it would place me under to you; and I think that we may now be far happier under present circumstances. With your huge fortune, I should have been merely a *cipher* in my own house.'

'Perhaps so, but you would have had *a pretty good figure before you*,' replied Pen.

'Indeed, I do not think that I should ever have proposed to you, unless you had given me a sort of opening, by a remark of yours. One course seems now plain enough.'

And so they went on talking. Judging that no one is justified in marrying without a reasonable maintenance, for in so doing he marries on his relations, yet still if people become attached to each other, should a reverse of circumstances take place, they have real reason to believe that in their case, if they wait patiently, they will be enabled to marry on faith as it were, with a present competency, and a reasonable prospect of more when necessary. Certainly no one is justified in marrying, on any consideration whatever, unless should fortune vanish with her gifts, independently of accessories, he or she is the person of all others one would choose.

But what was to be done? Here was the old house and 300*l.* a year; but how was the income to be made up to six or seven at the least, the lowest sum they considered would be prudent, with their habits of life, and with the prospect of a family? (I don't mean that they talked about such matters in such a cool and plain manner.)

Gerald had very handsomely offered to make up their income to 700*l.* a year; but Algernon, though very much obliged to him, did not much like the idea. However, it

was at last decided that Colonel Conyers's agent should have Algernon as an assistant; that the said Algernon should have 500*l.* a year for his assistance, and by-and-bye, in the event of a vacancy, should succeed to the Agency. No honorary post, as there were mines to be looked to, and all sorts of things. Nor was Algernon at all a bad man of business really. There was the house, on which a large sum had been expended. Well, the new farm-house would be wanted, and as the tenant's family were the pattern family of the neighbourhood, Algernon and Pen would take the restored part, the farmer's family could occupy the remainder: and as there was no particular reason for delaying the wedding, it was decided that it should take place during the following month.

‘Well, Jerry,’ said Charley to his sister, ‘awful sell for Uncle Algie, Pen's losing her fortune, isn't it? Well, I am very fond of Pen myself; but it must be a great bore for a man to marry without horses and all that sort of thing. I don't believe he will ever be able to sport claret even. Well, he's a good fellow, for an uncle. You, of course, will be one of the bridesmaids, at least I think it very probable Pen will ask you. I shall, of course, be Uncle Algie's best man. Shouldn't I like to ask some of our fellows from Eton!’

‘I don't think, though, Charley, you are very likely to be one of the bridesmen even. You had a claim on Captain Peregrine King certainly, but he even did not ask you. Uncle Geoffrey will be best man.’

‘O, no! Jerry, he's awfully old; he must be nearly thirty if not quite, and they always have young fellows for these sort of affairs.’

‘Well, but, Charley, you cannot surely call yourself a man. You are only a boy: if you had shot the highway

robber they would not have punished you for it, on the ground of your being an infant !’

‘Infant be hanged ! I should have had to swing for it, that is if they had brought it in murder, which I don’t think they would have done. I am not sure about manslaughter. Now, I have been reading all about it in the Governor’s “Blackstone.” Blackstone says, if a man attacks you, you must run away, as far as you can, till anything (a brick wall you know) prevents your running any further, and then you may turn and kill him ; and then there is something about a sword of the value of tenpence, but I don’t understand quite what it means. Algie’s revolver is worth 10*l*. I know it cost that. Well, I could not run away any further, because the hedge was on one side and a high bank on the other, and then the robbers were on one side. Well, I am not quite sure how it would have turned out ; however, I did not kill the man, and that’s a comfort so far. As for shooting a man in a duel, that’s a sort of thing one must. I wonder when our people are going to call on the Peregrine Kings. I heard mamma saying something about it. I know Algernon went to see him about that rascal, Sir Ezekiel Storton. My word, shouldn’t I like to hang him up from the battlements of the great tower ; robbing that poor clergyman, too, Pen used to speak of, and the “Lying-in Society.” I don’t quite know what that is. I suppose it is a sort of Mendacity Society ! where they cross-question the beggars, and those sort of people.’

‘So the Bishop is to marry them, I hear,’ said Jerry. ‘I wonder what his sister, Lady Elizabeth, will be like. They say she is excellent ; so good, with a spice of the Tartar in her, so the Bishop said one day. The wedding, Charley, is to be the week after next, and there are to be eight bridesmaids and eight bridesmen, and little Lady

Alice is to be invited to be a bridesmaid; she is just ten, and will do exactly for you.'

'Lady Alice be hanged! That's some of your folly, Jerry, I know it is. I've a good mind to pull your ears for it, and I will too.'

So saying, he made a dash at Jerry, half in fun and half in earnest; who caught him by the wrists, laid him down in the corner by main force, and then sat upon him till he promised to be good. At last an armistice was concluded, and the children started off for a walk; with great glee talking over the matter of the wedding, anticipating very little happiness for Algernon, but much fun during the wedding festivities for *themselves*.

And the wedding-day drew very near indeed; and the details of the wedding were arranged; and Lady Emily was engrossed by the difficult question of veils *versus* bonnets, bridesmaids' wreaths and dresses, as the women, bless them! always have been and always will be. Who were to wear white! who were to wear blue! who were to wear pink! and who was to walk with whom. The Bishop, of course, was to marry them, and his sister, Lady Elizabeth, was to accompany him.

'Oh, it will be dreadful,' said Algernon. 'We shall be *poor*, doubtless; but we shall not require model lodgings, though I trust that ours will be a model establishment. Lady Elizabeth's head is one mass of statistics crowded together in unwholesome contiguity. I shall lay a trap for Gawaine, and they may blaze away at one another about church-rates *versus* model lodgings, cookery on scientific principles, washing by high pressure engines, and drying and mangling on the Turkish bath system, evening schools, and mutual improvements. You will have to promise to adopt everything, Pen! I hear that she has adopted a steam-beetler, which is a sort of

improvement on Nasmyth's steam-hammer; only, by a multiplying wheel, it gives thirty strokes to the second. The beetler weighs only 56 cwt.! they tell me; but it makes up for weight by its extreme rapidity of movement. I do not know at how many tons weight the force of the blow is estimated; but the degree of finish it gives to the article in question is wonderful!

'Alarming! I should say,' observed Pen. 'The clothes would come out a pulp! Now, stop; *do* leave me alone. Here is Lady Elizabeth coming! Now, I'll ask her. Oh, Lady Elizabeth, Major Conyers informs me that you wash for the public with a steam-hammer, and I don't know what.'

'Well, Pen! (for I suppose I must call you so, as everybody else does) you shall have a full and true description of the process. Major Conyers (if you have not already found it out you will) is not one to print after. I, having no belongings of my own, would be very desolate did I not cut out work for myself. You know, I suppose, that I have a school of my own; that the school stretches out its branches in every direction, and blossoms and buds into cooking classes for women, mutual improvements for men, and into many other employments for both parties. Now, I have given up my house in the country to my first lieutenant, and give my chief attention to my school in the large manufacturing town, where poor Mrs. Jones's connections have huge iron works. The first thing I did was to establish a school. I took counsel with my friends, and began on a small scale. "Come dirty, come ragged, come just as you are," was my motto at first. Having selected a suitable building, not over large, it became crowded. Here was another difficulty. I had recruits from all classes. The clean animals would not keep company with the unclean beasts, and *vice versâ*. Irish

eschewed English. What was to be done? A factory, disused for some time, was in the market. I bought it at once, and fitted it up according to my own notions. The whole of it was well lighted with gas. On the ground floor, a sort of cellar some fifty feet long by forty, I have an industrial school three times a week. First, I did not know what to teach them; so I consulted a friend of mine, a gentleman who spends a very large fortune in doing good, and asked him what I was to do.

‘ “Well,” said he, “I have a school of the sort. I teach them to make their own clothes. First, I looked out for an old sailor, and very fortunately met with the very person I wanted in the father of one of my girls. So, whilst his daughter was educated in my school, I engaged him to teach my lads. And very well he taught them. They soon grew quite fond of him, and his incredible yarns, believing everything he told them.” ’

‘ Well, but, Lady Elizabeth, did you find them with materials? ’

‘ No, Pen, I did not, except just at first. Now, do you understand the prices of things? I thought not! And you talk of being married, too! Well, I won’t be hard upon you. Well, you can get a yard of fustian, such as lads wear, double width, for two shillings. This will make a lad of about fourteen a waistcoat and pair of trousers. In addition to this price, there would be a trifle for thread, calico, &c. Now, if the lad went to a shop, he would have to pay five or six shillings; and if he paid for them by instalments he would have to pay more.’

‘ Well, but how does your protégé pay for his nether garments? ’

‘ By instalments, certainly; but I make him pay before he takes his work home with him. They remain in the school till they are paid for. Now, my industrial class

occupy the ground floor or cellar so many nights a week.'

'But what do you do with it in the day-time — with the ground floor?'

'Oh, I have many uses for it. Joining it, I have my wash-houses, where all the washing is done by steam. I gave permission to the teachers, and the elder girls, to do all their washing there free! gratis! for nothing!! Not one would accept the offer, till the mistress of the school, an active, energetic, bright-eyed little woman, kilted up her gown, went down with a heap of dirty clothes, and rushed at once into steam and soapsuds with a zeal highly creditable. Then they all set to work with great glee. On the next day I gave them all their dinner, which the schoolmistress cooked for them: and a capital cook she is, too! All the cooking is done by gas. I have a gas oven by the fireplace; something like a banker's safe in appearance. The dinner was a sort of *omnium gatherum* — a kind of hot-pot: beef, potatoes, and onions, all stewed down together. Very good, I can tell you, when well made; for I occasionally had some of it. When my poor husband was alive, we used to have it for luncheon on the moors. Now! what do you think it cost them a head, after leaving a fair profit! Twopence-halfpenny, including bread. Now, as to the washing. First of all, the things are put into a barrel very strongly made, with a safety valve: this is filled with steam. When the things are well washed, they are then placed in a hot closet — so hot that you could not breathe in it. Next, they are mangled by steam, over cylinders filled with, I think, *super-heated* steam. The engine and steam apparatus cost me 100*l*. But then I grind corn with the engine, pump water, brew; in short, find the engine a most useful servant. Firing costs one shilling a day.

Next, I intend to start a couple of lodging-houses, and then it will come in very useful. Now, Major Conyers, I know that you are very active and energetic; and when you settle down in the old house, there, with rather more than three hundred a year, I should be happy to furnish you with the *statistics* you appear to have such a taste for. Some one observes that there are no things so fallacious as statistics.'

'But how do you manage about your evening schools? Are they all kept separate? I mean young men and women, boys and girls?'

'Yes, but I had a desperate fight at first. They would not come for a long time separately; but I was firm, and they had to give in. I don't find fault with them; we should have found it very dull ourselves under similar circumstances; however, it would not suit me to relax my rules to please them, so the matter righted itself in due time. But I found it necessary to break up my congregation, as my brother would term it. On the second floor, divided by a partition from cellar to attic, the young women at one end of the building, at the other the young men, with different staircases. On the next floor, the young girls and the lads. On the top story, the ragged of both classes; the *sans culottes*, in short. For the first floor I have other uses, and think of turning it into a nursery for infants; but that is a matter which will have to be settled hereafter. Just at present, with my town and country establishments, I have more than I can manage.'

'But,' said Algernon, with a very grave face, 'are these poor creatures (these young men and young women), are they to have no little rational society? no social gatherings? in short, no innocent little flirtations?'

'Your little flirtation is coming to an end, Major

Conyers, I fancy, in a day or two. I have no objection to these *little flirtations*, as you call them, when carried on with due decorum. They may fix their own time and place, so far as I am concerned; but it shan't be the same as mine, that I'll take care of! So I have driven Pen out of the room, at least we have between us. Lady Emily tells me that you had some idea of becoming a sort of lay deacon, a friar of orders grey, not a rifleman. Now I am an old woman, and may speak very plainly. A favourite maxim of my father's (they used to call him the Sanitary Earl) was, "Never swallow a stink!" Dreadfully coarse, isn't it? Now, avoid it physically and metaphorically. Don't shut your eyes to things merely because they are revolting to the sight, nor avert your face because they stink; don't give a man a shilling to keep his house in better order; don't give him a wide berth for the future, with a *liberavi animam meam!* and a sort of fancy that you have done your duty thoroughly. You will have a great deal to do. Now mind that your brother makes the cottages of the poor model cottages in reality. In the country there is no very great difficulty; but in the towns, the way matters are carried on is absolutely appalling. I hope that you and Pen will pay me a visit as soon as possible, and I think that I can show you a great deal likely to prove new to you. There was a poor lad who supposed himself to be dying; his medical man had given him up. He had been very unsteady, seldom working long at a time for any master, and was for many years on the tramp. His step-mother requested me to come and see him. The poor lad appeared very penitent, and deeply regretted his past life. He enlightened my ignorance on many points. I wanted, amongst other things, to find out a great deal about lodging-houses of a low order, and I certainly had to swallow

more than I liked. I made a few notes at the time, thinking that they might prove useful for reference. Here is the paper. Now there is a difference as to their management. Irish and English manage differently. At a lodging-house kept by an English man or woman, a *lad of seventeen* pays fifteen pence a week for a bed, which he shares with other lads; fifteen pence, in short, for the third of a bed. A MAN pays three shillings for a bed to himself, or if he share it with another man, he pays two shillings a week. This includes their washing, a shirt and pair of stockings. The Irish are less particular. A lad pays one shilling a week, and a man one shilling and sixpence. For this sum a lad has only the *fourth* share, sometimes only the *fifth* share of a bed. When this poor boy was much hurt, so ill that he could scarcely move, his four companions lifted him out of the bed and placed him on a box, covering him with a piece of old carpet! In the Irish houses young men and young women are taken to lodge in the same houses indiscriminately, but still there is great care taken to save appearances. In the English lodging-houses they do not take lodgers of different sexes, but only one sex, and with the married make a point of asking for the "marriage lines," otherwise they will not take them in. In the Irish houses they take in the young of both sexes, but make them sleep in different rooms. My patient informed me that, four or five years ago, people living in cellars were not permitted to take lodgers, but that this restriction had lately been done away with. Now these are looked upon as *tolerably* respectable lodging-house keepers. He hinted to me that there were others less particular. I found the lad, poor fellow, very open and honest. I got him a place, and he turned out very well. He was in the Union for the time; but did not much like the confinement, and, I fancy, the

enforced cleanliness. Then the diet, he told me, consisted of five ounces of bread and a pint of tea, at seven; six ounces of meat, a pound of potatoes, and a slice of bread, at twelve; tea at six, same as breakfast. Not that you are attending the least bit in the world to all that I am telling you! Perhaps, a year hence, you will prove more inclined to listen.'

In due time Captain Peregrine King returned to his abode in the country, sent his cards round, and appointed a day for the congratulations of his friends and neighbours, for to him the terms were synonymous. And on a certain day, Captain and Mrs. Peregrine King sat in state, Mrs. King in her wedding dress; Mrs. King a little broken in by this time. In fact, Captain Peregrine had told her more than once that she was an old fool, and that the only practical proof of wisdom she had ever given in her lifetime consisted in her marriage with himself. Honey-moon, indeed! not he, he had enough of honey-moons. Where was her money? *Her* money, indeed! She had *no* money; it was his money. Would he answer her one question? Yes, he would answer fifty or a hundred; but he would strongly advise her not to ask them. He wished she would not speak to him, and pretend to write at the same time. He begged she would not waste *his* paper and ink, and *his* time, too; it wasn't *hers*. What was hers was his. She had nothing. Her *correspondence*, indeed, said he, with a snarl; *he* called it, *picking LIES out of the inkstand!* Well, was her money at Coutts's? No, it wasn't at Coutts's.

'But, my dear Peregrine,' continued the lady.

'I am not your dear Peregrine, ma'am.'

'Well, but what am I to call you?' snarled the lady.

‘Captain King, ma’am; Captain King. Do you expect me to do the young lover at my time of life?’

‘Well, but Captain King, where is this estate you are going to buy? Pray, have you all my fortune in that iron safe up-stairs? I heard you talk about Exchequer bills and bank notes the other day.’

‘You are a fool, Mrs. King. Hold your tongue, ma’am. How dare you make such an idiot of yourself? Money in the house! Of course not. What, after the robbery committed, when Algernon Conyers was so nearly murdered, do you think that I would keep *money* in the house? Do you take me for a born idiot, ma’am? Of course I have not. Iron safe up-stairs? — three casks of brandy, you mean, which I took for a bad debt. (Faith, it’s brandy one does not often meet with. Millington will be for a deal.) Why do I keep the brandy up-stairs? Because I have my reasons for it. Iron chest in the room above the brandy? What if it is, ma’am? Hold your tongue. And to see you, too, sitting like a grinning skeleton in your bridal array. Married you for your *money*, did I? What do you think I married you for? — *love*, eh! You would have been a pauper, ma’am; aye, kept by the parish, if I had not rescued your fortune from that villain Storton; he ought to be pulled in pieces by wild horses. Perhaps,’ said he, ‘you would like to make over all your fortune to Pen! Wouldn’t you now? You are fool enough for anything, and you *love* Pen as only one woman *can* love another. Well, I suppose we must sit here all day. Why have I not got my blue coat with gilt buttons on, ma’am, and black trowsers, with white waistcoat? Because I am not an idiot, like somebody I could name. I neither heart nor feeling, ma’am! Why should I? You are all heart and affection, sweet creature!’ and he looked at her with a

diabolical leer. 'And you must insult that young lady, ma'am, who came to see me, must you? Was she Miss King? What's that to you, ma'am, whether it's Miss Brown, Miss Jones, or Miss Robinson. I intend her to spend a few days here. You think that I had better ask her mother, do you? Well, ma'am, I will, as you wish it. What are you crying for, you idiot? Sentimental, isn't it? Turn on the water main; it'll save the rate.'

Human nature could stand no more. She dashed at him in a fury, but the old man was cunning of fence, and caught her by the elbows in an instant, which he tied together with his pocket-handkerchief.

'Now,' said he, 'go up to your room at once. Confound it, here is the Conyers' carriage; make yourself decent, and come down. It is not necessary for me to show every one what a fool you are. Give me my handkerchief.'

Verily, Miss Tabitha had fallen into bad hands.

It was a very lovely summer's morning, and Algernon, after a somewhat sleepless night, turned out, and proceeded to look out of the window.

'Well, it's better to get up,' said he, 'than lie thinking here. Thinking in bed is waste of time. I wish the whole affair was over. Well, I must perform my toilet. Ah, the going to church is bad enough; then, I hear, one is expected to kiss the bridesmaids. Strange that the first wedding I ever was at will be my own. And then there is that abominable speech one will have to make after the breakfast; and to speak of Pen as *my dear wife*. These boots don't fit a bit in the world. Why, too, *will* Pen have me married in uniform. Well, if woman ever

were an angel, it would be dear Pen. What on earth does she see to like in *me*. Now for that HORRIBLE speech. "I rise to thank you all most sincerely for the very kind manner in which you have proposed my health." Stop, that won't do though. "It is with very great pleasure" (that's a lie); but "unaccustomed as I am to public speaking"—yes, that will do, it will make them all laugh—"Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking; for in these days it is popularly supposed a very extraordinary circumstance where a light dragoon can express himself coherently for ten seconds"—yes, that will do—"ten seconds"—I can never wear these boots—"for ten seconds, and I don't pretend to be better than my *friends*." (Friends? Yes "friends,—*comrades*," too much in the T. P. Cooke style)—"better than my friends. There are circumstances under which the feeble become as steel, the sluggard active as the leopard, the craven lion-hearted." (Lion-hearted? yes.) "If there be a crisis in the existence of any man which would nerve the feeble tongue, and cause a torrent of untutored but heart-stirring eloquence to, to, precipitate itself"—that will hardly do—"from the overflowing heart"—two hearts, *heart-stirring* and *overflowing* heart, together—that won't do. (I'll try a weed)—"it is, as in the present case, when one, who has hitherto roamed from flower to flower, and flitted from sweet to sweet, now finds himself at last bereft of all independent volition." Now for the grand peroration, something graphic about a young bear with all his troubles to come! My word! would not they all stare. Perhaps the less one says the better; thanking them for expressions of kind feeling, dear wife, and all that sort of thing. Now for an old shooting jacket and a stroll into the Park. I'll take my rod. Why am I to be the only creature *hooked* to-day? At all events, I shall escape an infinity of chaff. *Proposing,*

as I always have said, is bad enough. At all events, I'll breakfast at the Inn, and not show till ten.'

Nevertheless it was somewhat before ten when the gallant bridegroom made his appearance.

Old Jeff, as may be imagined, had taken upon himself the office of master of the ceremonies. There was no large party, merely the intimate friends of the family; the Millingtons, Captain Peregrine King and the fair Tabitha his wife, for Lady Emily had thought that, under present circumstances, it was as well to ask them. There was the usual breakfast at nine, which appeared to be continued without interruption till eleven.

The day was extraordinarily sultry; and at eleven the whole party walked from the castle to the quaint little Norman church, full of the altar tombs of the Conyers family, and brasses, from the thirteenth century downwards, to the memorial window, with its modest inscription to the late General and his family. The usual number of bridesmaids, evidently dressed to represent a double edition of the elements. Charley had to be bracketted off with a little girl of ten, the threatened Lady Alice, awfully to his disgust. The wedding went off like most weddings, except that Algernon, who was waiting for the bride, made a point of standing under the beam of the rood screen, whereby he gave his friends the idea of waiting for that other termination which together with marriage is stated to go by destiny! The Bishop, of course, married them; Gawaine reading the opening portion of the service. Then, the ceremony being over, they all strolled about the grounds, near the house, till the luncheon was ready: and it will not appear surprising, knowing her character, that Mrs. Peregrine King at once demanded precedence of every one as bride! so the Colonel vowed she should have the magnificent King's

chair from the hall, in which she was accordingly enthroned, to her great comfort.

The usual speeches were made, Peregrine King's being the best, with the exception of Lord Geoffrey's, who proposed to all the bridesmaids *seriatim*, and was at once accepted by Lady Mary, who chanced to be last in order, much to the amusement of the party present, who on Lord Geoffrey's saluting the lady publicly, gave him three cheers!

So 'the happy pair' started off in the barouche for the old house, which had been restored for them; and old satin slippers were thrown by the guests, Charley having a shot at the retreating carriage with an old shooting boot of the Colonel's, which he pitched into Pen's lap, who at once returned the compliment with great skill, hitting him on the head with it, to the great delight of everybody, with one exception; and then, as usual, the party separated, the ladies retiring, some to repose, others to talk over matters, and to consider how far certain incipient flirtations might be turned to good account. The younger men went to the stables to look at the Colonel's hunting stud, particularly the very young men, who lighted their cigars and strolled through the fields to the summer stables afterwards, although many of the party knew as little of a horse as of an old cow.

'Well, Colonel,' said Captain King, after they had together looked at the Colonel's favourite horse Marmion, which had gone dead lame, the stud-groom, as grooms always do, having pronounced it lame from a sprain in the shoulder. 'Clear enough,' said the gallant Captain. 'Who shoes for you? Thought so. For the first time? Exactly. Never let that man shoe for you again. Nothing like iron for keeping things in their proper place, sometimes too tight. You will hardly believe me when I

tell you that I was without one of the newest patent safes till the other day. I may tell you that I have lately had some papers of importance under my care, and I bought two in London the other day; buying two, they pay carriage of both; a thing one can always find a purchaser for. You, of course, have one; Millington, I know, has not, and I thought that perhaps I could do him a good turn. It is an immense comfort to feel safe. Even if my house took fire and was burnt to the ground, nothing could harm the chest; make it red-hot even, it would suffer no injury. You were wondering the other day who had bought the Moorfield estates; well I have bought them for my wife and myself, under one hundred thousand pounds. After that rascal Storton's flight, 'pon my life, I got nervous, and have the whole of Mrs. King's fortune in the house, locked up in the safe, which has been built into the wall by the fireplace, safe as the Bank of England. Moreover, the money will be paid away to-morrow at ten. How desperately dark its growing!

'Aye,' said the Colonel; 'thunder! Let us go into the house. I rather want to go into the muniment-room; it is at the top of the great tower. There is a curious paper I don't quite understand, and I should like you to look at. I am rather too stiff to like running up stairs, but you are light and active as ever.'

And passing through a long corridor they entered the hall of the great tower, a glorious Norman hall, with its groined roof supported by a massive circular pillar in the centre. Through this they passed up to the muniment-room, which was the highest room in the lofty old keep.

'Faith, you have a wide view from hence. That I fancy is Gawaine Conyers' church at the top of that hill some three or four miles off. I ought to see my house too from

here, for I can see the keep right well. Ah, there it is, by that very high elm.'

'My word, we are going to catch it!' said the Colonel. 'Did you ever see such clouds?' as a bank of black heavy clouds rose from behind them, and were rapidly spreading themselves over the face of the heavens.

'Dead against the wind too. Thunder, evidently.'

And presently it became so dark in the old tower that they could scarcely see each other; and suddenly a flash of the most brilliant violet hue lighted up the courtyard below them, followed by an instantaneous crash, not unlike the upsetting of a waggon-load of stones; the heavy clouds passed on, followed by lighter-coloured clouds of a smoky dun colour, and the wind freshened and soon became a tempest; and there were three or four loud peals, but at a continually increasing distance, followed by the most brilliant forked lightning, till suddenly the very heavens appeared to open and a perfect stream of electric flame descend, not vanishing instantaneously, but remaining for nearly three seconds. It was of a pink colour, and appeared to sparkle and crackle all over.

'My word,' said the Colonel; 'I never saw anything worse than that in the tropics.'

'Faith, it went uncommonly near my house,' said the Captain, with a very uncomfortable expression of face. 'Look there!' exclaimed he, as they saw in the distance Captain King's house, from which the flames burst forth on all sides. 'That last peal was very heavy.'

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the roof of the house appeared to be literally blown up into the air, and the flames blazed up three times as high as the tree top. Captain Peregrine King was speechless with horror; and a distant report was heard like that of a cannon.

‘The brandy has ignited!’ exclaimed the Captain. ‘Fortunately the safe is fire-proof. But it is just over it.’

A strange fascination came over the Captain; and he sat and watched the flames through a large telescope. The fire blazed like a furnace. Presently the frightened cattle in the farmyard made their way out through the agency of the Conyers’ rabbit, whose master, the lame tinker, had taken advantage of the Captain’s absence to visit his niece, who was, or had been, the housekeeper. Foremost came the Captain’s favourite bull, with glaring eyes and distended nostrils, looking frightened to death. Then came the cows, equally frightened, with tails up in the air. The Conyers’ rabbit, having got out of the general rush, under the wall of the farmyard, indulged in a frantic series of kicks, with his head well down between his fore legs.

‘I always thought Satan himself was in that brute,’ groaned Captain King inwardly, whilst he beheld his war-dance.

And he still sat watching the flames, as the blazing spirits rained down in streams of fire over the house. And so he kept watching; and soon the fire burnt itself out, and he could see nothing but the bare blackened walls. The heat had been so intense, what with the casks of spirits and what with the wind, that when Colonel Conyers and his people had arrived there with him, it had completely burnt itself out.

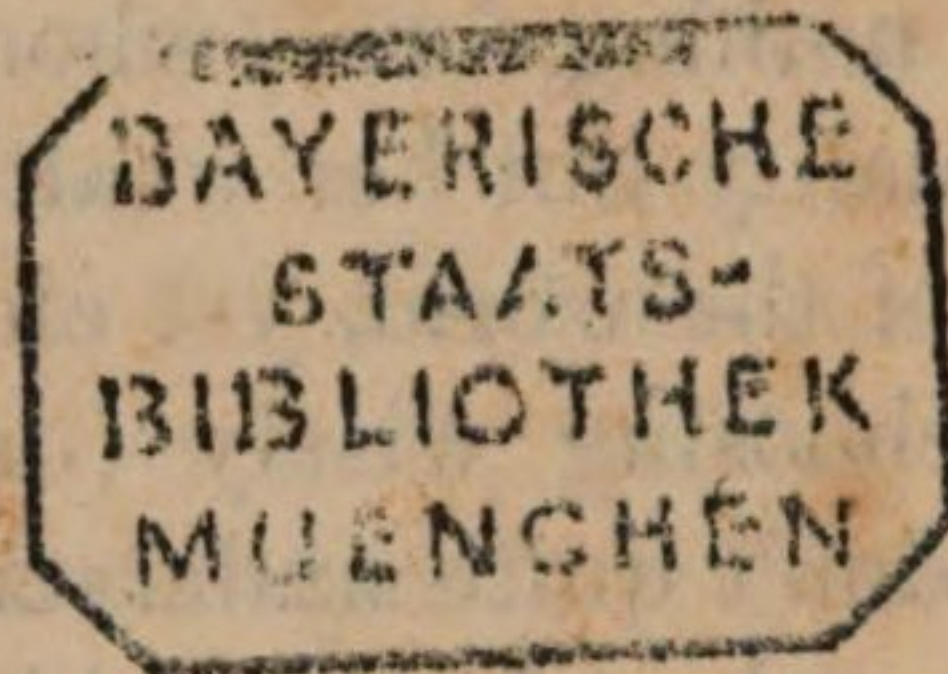
But what is that shapeless lump of molten iron which that wretched man is vacuously staring at? It is all that remains of his boasted safe. The full force of the lightning has passed through it, and has actually melted it. Proof against all other flame, what could it avail against the fire of heaven. Nearly seventy thousand pounds gone in a few seconds.

And what remained? Mrs. Peregrine King — an incumbrance, in good earnest. He had *sold himself* with a vengeance. Faith, what will Millington say? ‘If a man feed on draff it is his own affair; but important to him, indeed, is it that his trough be full,’ says Taylor. ‘But should his trough be emptied, he is indeed in an evil plight.’ And so it was to Peregrine King, married to a woman he cared nothing for — whom he disliked, in fact — with no one quality but her wealth to recommend her. A shrewd man of the world, yet clean outwitted.

Next, Algernon, choosing wisely (or being chosen, as the case may be, I don’t quite understand the rights of it) one whose fortune, though it would have tended to smoothe matters, was not one of her chief recommendations, yet is enabled to form a prudent marriage. Here are Eros and Anteros. Anteros may find another illustration, moreover, in the unjustifiable marriage. When people, as Dickens well expresses it, ‘having nothing but love to marry upon, marry upon that,’ Love turns to hatred and the union workhouse; or else they marry upon their friends and relations: if anything, a less respectable termination. But I am speaking of thoroughly and decidedly insufficient means: when a man marries out of his station on means scarcely double that of a well-to-do mechanic.

However, so far as Captain and Mrs. King were concerned, we may well be assured that they led a sort of cat and dog life of it; for the Captain fought most gallantly to retain what he had left, and she took care to have a fair share, considering that he ‘was unable to spend his full income!!’ Algernon, we may be sure, prospered with his loving and sensible wife. Gawaine continued to hold his own with every one, except in his own family.

We omitted to state that we heard, on the very best authority, that Mrs. King had been seen frequently in a state more amusing to the juveniles of the lower orders than instructive, occasionally reeling out of the village inn, where spirits were 'allowed to be *drank* on the premises.'



LONDON

PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.

NEW-STREET SQUARE

19



Thornton, Cyril

Conyers Lea or sketches of character military, magisterial and episcopal
by Cyril Thornton

London 1862

P.o.angl. 444 k

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